Social
Works?: **Open**

Autumn 2018

Editorial

The idea for *Social Works?: Open* came when
the Models of Validation project interviewed artists,
commissioners, producers, funders, representatives
of local authorities, researchers and academics involved
with socially engaged artistic practice at the start
of 2018. From these interviews we identified several
recurring issues in the field:

~   Difficulties of communication between the people
    involved in socially engaged artistic practice,
    leading to a hindering of progress in the field;

~   a lack of connection between artists and funders
    in socially engaged artistic practice, leading
    to frustration on both sides;

~   isolation facing artists working in these ways;

~   a lack of well supported, critical writing in the field.

We responded by applying for funding from Manchester
Metropolitan University and Arts Council England
to develop a programme of get-togethers, workshops,
artist commissions and writing, which aimed to address
and alleviate some of these issues. *Social Works?: Open*
speaks to the precariousness of this practice during
an extended period of government-led cuts to arts
funding across the UK, and the continued importance
of maintaining and supporting a critical voice within
socially engaged art. Deliberately open and broad
in its remit, the open call for commissioned pieces
of writing to launch this inaugural issue encouraged

anyone involved in socially engaged practice, at any stage of their career, to submit proposals on topics they felt were pertinent in the field in 2018. We had an overwhelming response, testament to the significance of this work, and the importance of supporting new and established voices in the field of social practice to publish their critical writing. The topics included in this first issue are varied and encompass a broad range of expertise and interests, but are all connected by a concern to accept and support critical engagement as an essential part of the field. Alongside the writing, the first 100 issues of the journal also feature two, limited-edition artist prints, by artists Les Monaghan and Joe Cotgrave.

Thank you to all the writers and the artists who contributed to this issue, and to the funders, whose support allowed the labour that went in to this work to be fairly compensated.

Enjoy!

Models of Validation Team,
A partnership between Axisweb
and Manchester Metropolitan University
Rebecca Senior, Mark Smith
& Amanda Ravetz

Notes on Contributors

Jen Delos Reyes

Jen Delos Reyes is a creative laborer, educator, writer, and radical community arts organizer. Her practice is as much about working with institutions as it is about creating and supporting sustainable artist-led culture. Delos Reyes worked within Portland State University from 2008–2014 to create the first flexible residency Art and Social Practice MFA program in the United States. She is the director and founder of Open Engagement, an international annual conference on socially engaged art.

www.jendelosreyes.com

Kerry Morrison

Kerry Morrison is an environmental artist and ecologist who works with processes of walking, talking, listening, drawing, photography, ethnography, data collection, and performance. In 2011 Kerry co-founded in-situ, a not-for-profit artist led initiative in Pendle, which serves to examine art, environment and culture in the locale of Brierfield, Nelson, and Colne.

R.M. Sánchez-Camus

Marcelo is a creative practitioner who develops works of art in collaboration with community partners. His interests lie in neighbourhood narratives, hidden mythologies, psychogeography, and outdoor interventions. He researches and writes on socially engaged practice and holds a doctorate, with a thesis entitled Applied Live Art. Recent project partners include Freedom Festival in Hull, Elan Valley Trust in Wales, Artangel, People United, and Circolombia. He was born in New York City to parents who emigrated from Chile and lives in London.

www.appliedliveart.com

Claire Mead

Claire Mead is a curator, art historian and queer feminist activist working in France and the UK. She is curator in residence at Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art where she is co-curating a workshop programme and exhibition around queering the museum collection in collaboration with the local LGBTQI community. She is also a coordinator for the grassroots activist organisation Collectif Archives LGBTQI in Paris campaigning for a public LGBTQI French archive, organising talks, workshops and debates, as well as a programmer for the Paris art organisation Polychrome, delivering screenings and exhibitions around queer and feminist activist practice.

They Are Here

They Are Here (f. 2006) is a collaborative practice steered by Helen Walker & Harun Morrison. They are currently based in London and on the River Lea. Their work can be read as a series of context specific scenarios. Resisting rigid hierarchy and foregrounding knowledge exchange they seek to create ephemeral systems and temporary, micro-communities that offer an alternate means of engaging with a situation, history or ideology. Institutions with which they have developed or presented work include: CCA Glasgow, Grand Union, Konsthall C, Southbank Centre, Furtherfield, Studio Voltaire, STUK and Tate Modern.

www.theyarehere.net

Harvey Dimond

Harvey Dimond (b. 1997) is an artist and programmer based in Glasgow. Their interests lie in queer activism, Caribbean identities and the implications of being black in Scotland. They are the co-founder of the People of Colour Society at The Glasgow School of Art, an organisation which aims to empower and platform creatives of colour and challenge institutional racism. In March 2018 they co-curated *In Residence*, a series of exhibitions and events featuring 40+ artists of colour.

Lauren Velvick

Lauren Velvick is a writer, artist and curator based in the North of England. She is a regular contributor to national and local arts publications and is a Director of contemporary art and writing publication Corridor8. Lauren is custodian of two informal archives and has an ongoing interest in the ethics and labour of archiving and administration.

Les Monaghan

Les is interested in class, community, and representation. Previously a press photographer schooled in unambiguous imagery, he works by deconstructing the documentary method through successive projects; staging photographs with migrants' assimilation (2006–2008), working with texts, the year long commission Aspirations Doncaster (2014) and the ACE funded The Desire Project (2015–2016), collaborating with others and recontextualising Relative Poverty (2016–2018). Works are often shown on a large scale, engaging directly with the public.

www.relativepoverty.org

Joe Cotgrave

Joseph Cotgrave's practice explores personal narratives, as a young gay man living with HIV. He engages with audiences to create meaningful conversation surrounding issues relating to the virus. His practice aims to highlight and subsequently reduce the stigma that exists for people living with HIV, particularly amongst at-risk groups.

Personally, the work provides Joe with a space in which to comprehend his experience of HIV diagnosis, stigma and trauma, and to reconcile those issues visually, in collaboration with audiences. As audiences navigate site-specific installations they are confronted with a juxtaposing commentary of HIV, traditional narratives compete with contemporary experiences. And, as they do so they are provided with greater understanding of HIV. This understanding transforms how audiences engage, not only with the work, but also with the artist.

www.josephcotgrave.uk/home

It's Trouble — Using, Misusing and Reclaiming Queer

'Queer ! Ah, do we really have to use that word ? It's trouble.' [1]

Claire Mead

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1   QUEER NATION, Why Queer?, QUEER NATION MANIFESTO, 1990

QUEER NATION's 1990 manifesto embraced the insult's strangeness and anger. The activist group's response to homophobic and transphobic violence and erasure within the AIDS/HIV epidemic was to reclaim public space, using confrontational language to shock and subvert. Queer expresses desire to challenge gender and sexual societal norms rather than assimilate into them. Yet its uses have also shifted, mutated, clashed and overlapped. Renate Lorenz envisions both queer activism and aesthetics rooted within the body as a form of drag, expressing marginality, displacement and subversion.[2] Queer artistic practice may reflect this embodied experience, alongside personal and collective activism. As a queer working-class activist and artist, Liv Wynter specifically uses language and performance to engage with gender, sexuality, the body and the trauma of abuse, by and for people on the margins, defining themselves.[3]

Yet what happens when queer is dragged from the margins into the mainstream? Tate Britain's 2017 exhibition 'Queer British Art 1861–1967' aimed to make visible LGBTQI+ artistic practice, celebrating the 1967 Sexual Offences Act's 50th anniversary. However its title clashed with its curating by disengaging with the word's political trouble-making. Distilling inherently queer meaning from works based on their authors' lives failed to challenge gender and sexual norms. Queer used as shorthand for the LGBTQI+ community also overlooked queer activism's struggles against sexism, racism and classism by showcasing a mainly male, white and middle-class selection. Liv Wynter's resignation from Tate a year later reflected this paradox. Protesting lack of support

2   Renate Lorenz, Queer Art: A Freak Theory,
     Transcript Verlag, 2012

3   "Being queer means leading a different sort of life. It's not
     about the mainstream, profit-margins, patriotism, patriarchy
     or being assimilated. It's not about executive directors,
     privilege and elitism. It's about being on the margins, defining
     ourselves". QUEER NATION, An Army of Lovers Cannot Love,
     QUEER NATION MANIFESTO, 1990

for marginalised audiences and staff, they pinpointed temporary diversity-led programming as a distraction from the institution's long-term issues.[4]

In contrast, National Trust's 2017 'Prejudice and Pride' used queerness as a cultural political tool applied to an awareness of heritage sites' histories of privilege and exclusion. Queerness as a strategy to avoid imposing evidence of same-sex desire on historical subjects invited wider interpretations around subverting gender and sexual norms.[5] This was also achieved through contemporary artistic and activist interventions. Sutton House welcoming Sarah Moore's exhibition portraying black trans activist Munroe Bergdorf took on a significant meaning within a space queered by its 'identity crisis' of shifting states throughout its history. In this context queer becomes 'a way of thinking about things in unexpected ways.'[6] Sutton House also made itself accountable to its audience by repurposing its historic space to become a site of activism and support for the local LGBTQI+ community.[7]

Queering the institution should be an ongoing self-critical process challenging its very structure, defined by active collaboration and engagement with queer artists, audiences and activists alike. Queer's disruptive potential, given it is reclaimed back from a token word into an activist weapon, can subvert the institution from within to create dialogue, experimenting in form as well as content. *I want to show you a body*, by artist and educator Linda Stupart and trans activist group Gendered Intelligence, as a Tate school learning resource, feels like an artwork and reads like a manifesto in its powerful and radical language. In doing so, it subverts expectations around experiencing gender non-conformity in art, school and the museum by inviting questions, conversations, performance and playfulness.[8] The resource results from a series of workshops conducted by Linda Stupart and Gendered Intelligence in 2017, showing its own emergence as an experimental tool engaged in direct collaboration and exchange with young people. In this context and within wider queering strategies, art becomes a starting point towards imagining and creating disruption and disobedience within everyday life. It looks for a fight and invites confusion. It's trouble.

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4   Liv Wynter, RESIGNATION FROM TATE, 8th March 2018

5   Richard Sandell and Matt Smith, BRINGING QUEER HOME, in Prejudice and Pride, ed. Rachel Lennon, Richard Sandell, Matt Smith, RCMG, 2018

6   National Trust Website, Sutton House Queered, 2017 (https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sutton-house-and-breakers-yard/features/sutton-house-queered)

7   Chris Cleeve and Sean Curran, Queering Heritage Sites: a manifesto, in Prejudice and Pride, ed. Rachel Lennon, Richard Sandell, Matt Smith, RCMG, 2018

8   Linda Stupart and Gendered Intelligence, I want to show you a body: thinking through gender, bodies and building different worlds, Schools and Teachers Tate London Learning Resource, 2018 (https://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/122609)

I AM A
mannish
muffdiver
amazon
feminist
queer
lesbian
femme
AND PROUD!

fierce pussy,
I am a Mannish Muffdiver, 1991–5.

Photo-xerograph wheat pasted on the
streets of New York by this collective
of queer women artists.

**Dear
Social Works,**

I recently attended a national arts conference which consisted of artists, arts professionals and participants from socially engaged projects.

What struck me most about the event, was that every speaker that I heard on the main stage began with a preamble about themselves, who they are and where they have come from. Now, this could be an example of the vain artist, but in fact, I think the intention was to distance themselves from something seen as more sinister in the world today, and that is the modern-day baddie the stale, pale male.

Yes! We must challenge and re-dress the inequalities of our society, but let's not fall into the trap of creating gangs against gangs within our sector, it feels like we've been there before. Instead, let's stamp out the traits that are the real problem, such as greed, arrogance, aggression and elitism.

It was of course ironic that the white, male and privileged Chair of the Arts Council, who spoke at the end of the conference, didn't start with a preamble about himself, but did announce a significant new investment of funding for the sector.

It is true, that we are living in difficult and distressing times, so let's counterbalance this by creating trust and positive social change for everyone. We are incredibly lucky to enjoy the arts as our playground and place of work. We should welcome everybody into our privileged world, whilst not tolerating bad behaviour from anyone.

**Yours sincerely,
A pasty, female in't North**

(In)visibility: Black Artistic Practices in Scotland

Harvey Dimond

Blackness and Scottish-ness seem to be two identities that are constantly at odds with one another, as if they were somehow contentious. Despite the existence of African people in Scotland for a millennia, black Scottish identity continues to be constantly questioned, eroded and erased. The centering of London as the cradle of black cultural production in Britain often marginalises the activities of other black practitioners based elsewhere in the UK, including those in Scotland. I therefore wanted to use this space to discuss the abundance of black practitioners and collectives who are thriving in Scotland, but also to examine the challenges they face.

Being black, living in Scotland, and working within the arts brings with it a unique and pervasive sense of erasure. Black creatives live and work with the invisibility that comes with being black in Scotland, but also the hyper-visibility that comes with being one of the few black faces in art institutions, whether that be the gallery, the theatre, or the art school.

Two significant events in the last year have signalled continuing structural issues that black artists within Scotland have to contend with. The first was the removal of Transmission's regular funding by Creative Scotland, for the first time in the gallery's history.

Is it a coincidence that it is also the first time in the gallery's existence that the committee has been formed entirely of people of colour? The fluidity of Transmission as a space, as well as its success in being a safe space for people of colour to come together, makes it, in my opinion, the most important space in Scotland. I am certain that the organisation I co-founded, the People of Colour Society at The Glasgow School of Art, would not exist without the work of the dedicated committee. Creative Scotland's decision to pull funding from such a crucial space is the perfect metaphor for the hostile climate in which black artists in Scotland are operating.

The second event was this year's rendition of Glasgow International, which was rolled out under the banner of 'inclusivity' and 'diversity'. Although there was a real visible increase in the number of artists of colour participating, many of these artists were working without the safety net of the Director's Programme, instead forced to work in marginal, liminal, non-art spaces, and with the onerous task of securing funding. The use of these DIY, non-art spaces (seen as part and parcel of working as an artist in Glasgow), needs to be discussed in relation to race, class and gender, and how living with these identities affects access to established, funded art spaces.

Despite the formation of many collectives in response to the shortcomings of councils, museums and universities, the need to *react* has been subordinated by the desire to *create*. This is evident in the plethora of collectives and groups *flourishing* in Scotland.

Edinburgh-based *SPIT Collective* (https://www.facebook.com/spitcollective/) **are creating spaces to examine the under-representation of marginalised groups in Scotland. The group have just finished running a summer school, which consisted of workshops and discussions. *Scotch Bonnet*** (https://www.facebook.com/sctchbnnt/)**, also based in Edinburgh, aim to create club environments that centre QTIPOC (Queer, Trans, Intersex People of Colour).**

Yon Afro Collective (https://www.facebook.com/yonafrocollective) **are a Black-led organisation who aim to challenge the under-representation of women of colour in Scotland. The collective held an exhibition as part of Glasgow International, titled *(Re) Imagining Self and Raising Consciousness of Existence*.**

Project X (https://www.projectxplatform.co.uk) **are a collective that platform and champion the dances of the African diaspora in Scotland; they deliver workshops for adults and children, often in collaborations with other black artists.**

**Dear
Social Works,**

In the current economic climate, artists increasingly view public/private-sponsored commissions as a legitimate means of income. In turn, under the guise of enabling people to democratically participate in the development and use of their locale, commissioners appropriate the language and practice of socially engaged art to help ameliorate disenfranchised communities to be more receptive to and take responsibility for detrimental socio-economic conditions beyond their control. All too often this scenario results in aesthetically and ethically compromised artworks that strive for consensus and subsequently fail as both critical artworks and socio-political endeavours towards social change. But should artists and curators be publicly lambasted for engaging in such 'art washing', whilst trying to survive in the face of persistent austerity? Is it possible to simultaneously work within state/privately-sponsored commissioning systems and produce critical artworks that engender

contested and thus democratic and public spaces towards social change? If so, how might this be possible and how should we articulate the value of socially engaged art within such contexts?

**Yours,
Anonymous**

Tell Me How You Really Feel:

A Call for Radical Honesty and Transparency in Socially Engaged Art

Jen Delos Reyes

I feel burnt out. I also feel uncertain about the future. You or people you know have undoubtedly been singing the praises of Adrienne Maree Brown's 2017 book 'Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds'. When I read it I did not feel the lightness, elation, or wisdom of nature people report feeling. It was not for me a welcome antidote to the non-profit industrial complex. I felt frustration. I loved the beauty and poetry of the concepts of adaptability, change, and collectivity as gleaned from the natural world, but simultaneously felt angry because I felt like it didn't change where I was at with my organization, and more importantly I was mad because I felt like she saw me. She had my number and called it.

Brown wrote that one can usually only do this kind of leadership work for ten years before becoming depleted. I read those words as I approached the ten year anniversary of Open Engagement, a conference, publishing arm, and site of care for the field of socially engaged art that I founded in 2007. I was struggling to keep going, and so was the organization. I can learn a lesson from a mushroom, but can mycelium pay my staff? Fundraising efforts were not as successful as we hoped. The partners we collectively brought together to support our work were not able to contribute more

energy, time, resources. Meanwhile, we were continuing to grow, supporting more artists and presenters, and attempting to do the work guided by values, community standards, and principles.

Over the course of the decade I dedicated to Open Engagement, it emerged as a space that was bringing together the complete ecology of socially engaged creative practices including artists, activists, audiences, collaborators, co-creators, cultural labourers, educators, institutions, policy makers, and funders. In many ways this spectrum reflected and mirrored the many facets of my own work in the field. I was making socially engaged art. I was co-directing an MFA program focused on art and social practice. I was working with a museum to integrate socially engaged art into their institution. I was often called upon to evaluate socially engaged art practice for both artists and funders. Open Engagement was an important and crucial site because it connected those engaged in and impacted by the work, with those who sought to support and promote it.

The last Open Engagement conference in its current form took place in 2018. In 2019 the core organizers are taking time to reflect on the needs of the field and the organization before continuing to do the integral work of supporting artists and communities making creative changes through acts of radical imagination that will lead us to a more just, kind, and equitable world. In order to be able to do this we need to understand how interconnected all of this work truly is.

This text will candidly examine a collection of my experiences around education for socially engaged art: art making, institution building, and funding — namely navigating the ethics of creating socially engaged art, working with museums, and resourcing these practices. Radical honesty and transparency are paths toward a less opaque, more inclusive, and ultimately more emotionally healthy and sustainable approach to these ways of working for artists, administrators, communities, and institutions. Sharing our struggles, our feelings, frustrations, and challenges can help us to achieve a holistic and sustainable approach to socially engaged art.

Working with Collaborators/Co-creators

Between 2008–2014 I was co-directing the MFA program in Art and Social Practice at Portland State University. During this time I created the first flexible residency Art and Social Practice MFA programme in the United States and devised the curriculum that focused on place, engagement, and dialogue. Context, community, and collaboration were foundational to the experience in the programme. The flexible residency programme allowed for artists embedded in their communities to remain on site throughout their course of study.

A staple of our programme was a weekly workshop with all of the graduate students. This day-long class was an incredibly open and supportive space in which students shared their struggles, questions, feelings, and frustrations. One of the constant struggles I saw for the students and artists engaged in community based socially engaged work was around ethical concerns and power dynamics.

In 2013 we invited artist Ben Kinmont to lead a workshop. In Kinmont's own work, he has written a definition of project work, and Ethical Considerations for Project Work, and the students dove right into serious conversations around collaboration and co-creating work. The following document is what was produced from the workshop and published by Kinmont's imprint Antinomian Press. It is a proposed contract for collaborators of socially engaged art. The beauty, vulnerability, honesty, and poetics of this agreement reflect the kind of approaches to this work I believe can help to foster more understanding, and meaningful work for all involved.

A Contract Proposed

~ As an artist I will carefully consider where you and where we are.

~ I will work with you as an equal; as a full human being with rights, fears, and hopes.

~ I will communicate what I am doing and why.

~ I will endeavour to make our interaction, however small, a contribution to our lives.

~ I will be as clear as possible in my communication, whether written, verbal, or non-verbal.

~ I will recognize and assume responsibility for my authorship.

~ I have written this contract and you have also written contracts.

~ If you choose to participate you may alter the contract.

~ Our roles can shift through open communication.

~ Our exchange may not be an apple for an apple, it may be an apple for five raisins.

~ As part of this contract, the artist will make a series of proposals, suggestions, and will value critical feedback and incorporate it into the proposal.

~ We are all part of the public.

~ We will build a relationship.

~ We will demonstrate respect by acknowledging the value of your personal experience.

~ We will listen to you.

~ We will be open to change according to our mutual needs and ideas.

~ We will not compromise our respective values.

~ We will work toward creating something we are both proud of and is the best representation of our efforts.

~ We will respect the birth, growth, (and sometimes death) of the work we create together.

~ The proposed interaction can have a life beyond the contract.

~ All collaborations, and the creation of all socially engaged art works would benefit from this kind of honest and vulnerable communication at the outset of an endeavour.

Institutional Change

During my time at Portland State University I worked closely with the Portland Art Museum to develop programming and long term institutional change that would build socially engaged and community based art into the structure of the museum, allow artists to rethink what can happen in a museum, and reinvigorate the idea of the museum as a public space. One of the main issues with this work, and this feels like a common problem I hear from others involved in this kind of institutional change work, is that often it is only one department in an institution trying to take on this work. The already challenging work is then only made more difficult by unnecessary internal barriers. Versions of this story feel true for Shine a Light at the Portland Art Museum, and in some ways most likely impacted the Hammer Museum Public Engagement residency, and the Walker Art Museum's Open Field.

Recently I served on the advisory council for the Met's new borough based programmes focused on socially engaged art. It was clear that similar to how things were at the Portland Art Museum this initiative was coming from the Education Department and had little to no ground floor buy in from other departments, including curatorial. I felt the deep frustration of still feeling the need to center objects over people in conversations with curators and was even reprimanded for setting the institutional work back by stating as much in a meeting with other museum departments present. Museums need to embrace their social function and ultimate value. These are institutions for the people; without people the collections have no value. These are agreements, values, and tenets an entire institution should agree on before setting out to do this work, otherwise much time, energy, and resources are wasted on politicking, mollycoddling, and otherwise trying to subvert an institution that just needs to radically change.

Supporting Socially Engaged Art

I have assisted in the process of working with multiple funders and granting bodies in setting up funding streams for socially engaged art. I also frequently serve as a grant reviewer for funders that provide financial support to artists and organizations engaged in socially engaged art. I have been involved with three different types of granting organizations: city based agency/percent for art programmes, foundations/organizations funded primarily by donors, re-granting programmes, artist led collective projects that generate funds for micro granting. The latter being one of the ways to support our work and each other outside of the funding and non-profit industrial complex.

One of the major problems with all of these systems is the inherently competitive nature of the support. Another concern is that many funders are concerned with measuring impact, which is a challenging criteria that is not able to fully capture all the kinds of changes and resonances these practices can have over time on individuals, communities, and the field. Another problem I have encountered is city agencies setting up grants specifically for social practice and community based work and then having grant reviewers with no background or understanding of these ways of workings and then scoring the work low because they don't know what they are producing (expecting an object), or that they don't see how it is art. With organizations dedicated to supporting these practices I feel like optics can be a barrier to true support — spending too much time and many resources on producing materials to communicate out and message the work and the supported artists.

These systems are in many ways dysfunctional, but they persist because they are familiar structures, provide security (for some), and ultimately do support some of this critical work to happen in the world. But what are other ways that might feel more inclusive, holistically supportive, and liberating?

What agency do we have to change the systems we engage with?

As in any healthy relationship, we need to be able to communicate our needs, our desires, and our wants. This is the agency we have, to speak honestly and truthfully about our hopes, our work, and the ultimate outcomes. I wish that this proposition to just speak candidly and with honesty did not feel like a radical proposition.

To return to language and imagery from Emergent Strategy, you can think of socially engaged art as an ecosystem of practices that are interconnected and support each other. Artists, institutions, funders, collaborators and community members must all work together to think of ways to sustain this work, and each other. We need to all be honest with ourselves, and one another about why it is we do the work so that we can find ways to work together with ease, purpose, and integrity. This might mean we lose some things we thought were needed, that will be OK. It might also mean change, and discomfort. We will move through it. I will tell you what I really feel, and I hope you can feel supported to do the same. That just might need to be a line that gets added to 'A Contract Proposed'.

**Dear
Social Works,**

When I go to socially engaged art practice conferences, am I the only one who notices that the structures and formats chosen, the language used and the non-verbal messages delivered, often undermine intentions rather than underpin them?

Am I the only one who sees that access is not just about ramps and large print, that it's about social and political barriers too? That saying one thing and using actions that convey the opposite, are not acceptable anymore?

Am I the only one who doesn't want to be the passive receiver of the 'experts' wisdom? I don't want to be asked to submit a question at the start of a conference for inclusion in a panel talk. We are innovative people, used to working at the margins, finding new paths, new solutions with minimal support. We already work in the social context, collaborating and co-producing with other people; socially engaged practice is not homogenous.

Conferences could be different. Perhaps active participation by everyone in the room throughout the day + playfulness –> increased interest –> thoughtful listening –>; meaningful critical dialogue –>; inspiration to use difference of viewpoints for positive change. I'm for agonism.

**Regards
Ami Theonlyone**

Let's Talk About Ethics

Kerry Morrison

As socially engaged practitioners, creative producers and organisations commissioning socially engaged art, where do we stand when it comes to research integrity and ethics?

As a practitioner I have been commissioned to work with and within communities on many occasions. Conversations and participation have been at the core of this practice. When finding myself in a new locale, working on a new commission, first, to get an understanding of place, I talk to people. These conversations inform me about local concerns, issues, and pride. They give me an understanding of the environs and what matters to the people who live and work there. These conversations can spark — and often do — ideas for new work. However, lend someone your ear and you can often hear more than expected. Conversations can quickly focus in on the personal and the political, that is to say, the person who you are talking to can open up and start speaking of things that are extremely personal to them, such as their health and well-being, past traumas and current situations that are causing upset or worse. Or, they may begin to see you as a like-minded person and confidante and begin to share with you their political, religious, or cultural beliefs.

As a practitioner, what do we do with this sensitive 'material' for it is not a casual conversation we are having: we are conducting research and gathering material for new work: socially engaged art.

How we conduct ourselves in these situations is a matter of ethics. So too, what we do with the information we extrapolate. Facebook, Instagram, blogging are all tools and methods of reflecting for the artist. Dialogic processes get recorded and sometimes they get published. At the beginning of an encounter, at the start of a conversation with someone, do we make clear that we are artists conducting research for a socially engaged art project? Do we

let the other person know that what they say may be used in the development of the artwork or may be published? Do we ask for their consent? Do we offer anonymity? Are we working with this person, and if so, what precisely is their role and are they fully aware of that role? Or, are we mining them for information?

How we treat people and work with human participants is just one ethical consideration amongst many when we enter the realms of socially engaged arts practice. Others include:

~ Funding sources: Who is funding the project and has their money come from ethical sources? For example, the collective Liberate Tate employed creative activism to raise awareness and challenge The Tate's income from BP (British Petroleum); the collective's aim was to *free art from oil* (Liberate Tate, n.d.). Similarly, Manchester's Museum of Science and Industry was challenged with regard to funding they receive. Both institutions commission artists to create artwork, including socially engaged and participatory art.

~ Environmental ethics and the impact our work may have on the environment, ecological systems and non-humans actors. Environmental ethics extends to the products and materials we use in our work, for example, the origins and impacts of materials: is the matter a product of habitat destruction (for example, palm oil), has the product been tested on animals or produced without consideration for animal welfare? Is the material biodegradable, and does the material have a negative impact on climate change? And;

~ Aesthetics: the consideration required to marry both ethical and aesthetic concerns. Aesthetics within socially engaged practice is connected to how we work with people and human ethics as well as environmental ethics and the choices we make when sourcing materials; as well as where we locate the work.

It is alarming to acknowledge, that in all my years of social art practice working in and with communities — with people — I have never once been asked to comply with or abide by a code of ethics. I have never once been asked about ethics. And yet, socially engaged art is an actual social action. It happens in real time, within the social realm, with social intercourse, and within an ecological realm. It involves working directly with people,

co-creation, and participatory work. And, often there is an expectation to 'help' or to bring about positive change. As Risë Wilson puts it:

> The twenty-first century has seen a burgeoning swell of artists seeking to make a difference/to engage with their neighbours/or with someone else's neighbours/to be activists/to be urban planners/to 'make places' and 'build bridges'/to connect more directly with the people who would otherwise serve as anonymous audience to their work. But among those notable ambitions, what is painfully absent is an ethical framework to guide all involved.

(Wilson, 2015, p. 23)

The need to engage with, and understand, the ethics of practice not only appears poorly considered within socially engaged art practice, but all-too-often absent. Indeed, as is stated in the Paul Hamlyn publication ArtWorks Code of Practice: There are very few codes of practice in participatory arts **(Deane, 2014, p.2)**. Perhaps this is because we feel codes of practice and ethical procedures will impinge upon artistic freedom and our aesthetic choices. However, as Pablo Helguera writes in his handbook *An Education for Socially Engaged Artists,* socially engaged art, often referred to as social practice, cannot be produced inside a knowledge vacuum: it is a process based, collaborative, conceptual practice whereby social interaction is inseparable from socially engaged art **(Helguera, 2011)**. Socially engaged art involves working directly with people and often in collaboration. Anthony Downey writes: socially engaged art often involves close, if not intimate, degrees of familiarity and involvement with given social groups and people over extended periods of time. He states that this arts practice has problematised critical reaction to collaborative practices, involving as they do a series of ethical quandaries when it comes to considering how communities are co-opted, represented and in some instances exploited in the name of making art **(Downey, 2009, p. 594)**. Such criticism begs the questions: How are we – as individuals, organisations, and the broader art world — ensuring that socially engaged art, social art

practice, dialogic practice, and participatory practice is conducted with integrity and ethical considerations? And what are the ethical considerations?

On the UK Research Integrity Office website is a Code of Practice for Research: Promoting Good Practice And Preventing Misconduct with a recommended checklist for researches. On this list are a number of points pertinent to the practice and research of socially engaged practitioners and pertinent to socially engaged art commissioners, curators, and creative producers.

Has a risk assessment been conducted to determine:

~ Whether there are any ethical issues and whether ethics review is required

~ The potential for risks to the organisation or the health, safety and well-being of researchers and participants

~ Has your research undergone any ethical review, especially if it involves animal, human participants, or personal data?

~ Have you reached an agreement relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?

~ Will your research be reported accurately and honestly

~ Will all contributions to the research be acknowledged

(UK Research Integrity Office, 2009).

Has an agreement been made with regard to intellectual property rights and will all contributions to the research be acknowledged? These indeed are interesting points to consider in relation to authorship of socially engaged art work. Who is the named author? How should we, and how do we, acknowledge partners, participants, collaborators and co-creators? Will all contributions to the work be acknowledged, and if so, where in that list of acknowledgements does the artist appear? Is the process one of democratization or does this arts practice remain locked into the hierarchical Modernist agenda whereby the artist is genius?

And what about the well-being of the researcher — the artist? Who is looking out for the welfare of the artist? What support is there for the artist encountering upsetting accounts and challenging situations? What procedures are in place should the artist find themselves in a dangerous or threatening situation?

With well-meaning intentions, artists get commissioned and placed into communities and areas of society not always known to them with the expectation that they will produce a 'good' piece of Socially Engaged Art, or bring about some kind of positive change. Conversations, working with vulnerable members of a community, working with people with protected characteristics, working in areas of high and multiple deprivation, or even working in a neighbourhood different from their own with a different cultural background can present unexpected challenges that the artist may be ill equipped to deal with. Furthermore, the artist could themselves be left 'high and dry', drafted into an unfamiliar place and left alone struggling to navigate through complex territories without the necessary support, contacts, or skills. In his blog, *The Failure of Participation,* Anthony Schrag (n.d.) describes in detail, in 36 entries, a situation he found himself in whereby the commissioner just left him to get on with it and the consequences that action (or lack thereof) had on him, as the artist, and on the project. Connected to this is the consideration of the artist's safety – any artist commissioned to work in situations unknown to them. For example, is the artist engaging alone (lone working)? Are they in a safe environment? What are the risks? What are the dangers?

When working as an arts officer for a local authority, a lone worker procedure was in place for the authority's staff. As a freelance artist, commissioned to engage within a locale, lone working has never been a consideration. I am left to wander, which, I freely admit, suits me fine, but is it good practice?

Discourse around ethical considerations within socially engaged arts may seem a bit dry and heading towards a shade of red tape and bureaucracy. But it can be argued that socially engaged practice has stepped beyond the parameters of purely an art form and into a hybrid space that involves other actors (human and non human) and other disciplines. The role of the artist, and their methods, has shifted. The artist, if working in collaboration, is no longer the sole author, but a co-creator. While socially engaged art remains very much connected to the visual and performing arts it also relies on being able to draw on the

understanding, methodologies and skills that come from other disciplines, for example: sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and the environmental sciences. Interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity have become fundamental elements of socially engaged art. To clarify these terms:

> A multidisciplinary approach is one where individuals or groups working in different disciplines address the same issue, whereas an interdisciplinary approach is one where an individual or a group work at the boundaries of traditional disciplines an often in the gaps that emerge between the disciplines and a transdisciplinary approach is one where an individual or group uses knowledge from a number of disciplines to see new connections and gain new insights.
>
> **(James *et al*, 2009, p66)**

A socially engaged process — ideally — democratises; and the artist, whose speciality includes working with people and society in a professional capacity, becomes one individual amongst a cohort of participants **(Helguera, 2011)**. This is articulated in William Titley's writing up of a socially engaged arts project. Titley reflects on working with a group of male carers and the shift from being the artist working with participants to being one of the guys. The shift begins as the guys slowly get to know one another and the artist becomes a participant in the social process of socially engaged art; during the processes of meeting and talking, the cohort become a part of each other's lives and the initial tenuous links growing into intimate bonds **(Titley, 2017, p.245)**. In writing about the process and the personal stories connected to caring for loved ones, Titley also raises concern about ethical procedures:

> The more I thought about it, the more I started to worry about safeguarding and ethical issues. We were three blokes who didn't really know each other, and yet we had just agreed to meet at one of our houses for lunch. What if something unexpected occurred and everyone got stressed out?
>
> **(Titley, 2017. P.242)**

Titley's project with male carers was both a socially engaged art commission and a case study within PhD research. The latter requiring ethical clearance for research with human participants, the former, not. Consequently, all participants were fully informed of the project and consented to be participants. Anyone could withdraw at any time, and all were given anonymity.

Not all socially engaged art occurs without ethical consideration (for example: Blackmore, 2017; Deane, 2014; Froggett, 2011; Hope, 2011; Kester 2004, 2005 & 2011; Titley, 2017; Platform London, 2018; In-Situ 2018). More, socially engaged art research at postgraduate level, within academic institutions, requires ethical approval — as with all proposed research projects involving the participation of human subjects. Universities and their researchers — both staff and students — have a duty to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear, and that there is a robust framework in place to ensure integrity and ethical procedures. At their core, ethical principles stress the need to:

> (a) do good (known as beneficence) and
>
> (b) do no harm (known as non-malfeasance).
>
> In practice, these ethical principles mean that all researchers, whether staff or students, need to ensure that their research is designed and conducted to the highest standards possible. In order to achieve this, researchers may, dependent upon the nature of their project, be required to:
>
> (1) obtain informed consent from potential research participants or those responsible for their well-being (e.g. parents);
>
> (2) minimise the risk of harm to participants;
>
> (3) protect their anonymity and confidentiality;
>
> (4) avoid using deceptive or covert practices; and
>
> (5) give participants the right to withdraw from the research.
>
> **(Liverpool Hope University, 2018)**

My provocation is, given that socially engaged art involves working with human participants, working in collaboration with others, and working within an ecological realm, that ethics of practice should be examined and, moreover, an ethical framework for socially engaged art agreed upon and abided by. Currently, integrity and ethics appears very much at the discretion and personal understandings of the practitioner or the commissioning organization.

There are numerous ethical dilemmas to consider and debate within socially engaged practice. I have barely touched upon but a few. In his essay *Social Practice Or Trojan Horse?* Wilson goes deeper into the debate delving into good intentions, ego, generosity of communities, and services for social good; Wilson concludes: The absence of a shared set of professional ethics, or at least a standard set of questions for all involved to consider, stands in the way of good practice and ultimately the larger goal of creating a better world **(Wilson, 2015, p.28)**. Agreed. So let's begin to talk about ethics and work together to ensure that socially engaged art is created and produced with integrity and within an agreed ethical framework.

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Dear
Social Works,

Whether you identify as an artist, arts administrator, cultural labourer, funder, curator, educator or other, the fact that this publication has made its way to you, and that you are choosing to take this in, tells me that in some way we are in this together. Like me, you might believe that socially engaged art is essential and necessary in the struggle to create a more kind, just, and equitable world. We help to shape the world we want to see. I don't need to sell you on the mission, you already know that socially engaged art is necessary and critical work. What I have been asked to do is to give you advice. My advice is simple, and in many ways is a set of rules to live by, not just to do this work by. These are things that will seem obvious, or maybe read to you like platitudes. A criticism I have received often is that it feels like I am teaching lessons that are so simple they would not feel out of place in a kindergarten classroom — play nice, cooperate, be patient. Yes, this is basic, but how many of us can say we always move through our lives and work with kindness, love, respect, and

patience? This is part of the practice and the work. While the work we do is often complex, how we do it doesn't need have to be.

Respect and value the people you work with. — Without the people, there is no work.

Understand the context. — We are part of communities, legacies, histories, policies, institutions. Get to know where you are in the work.

These things take time. — This is life, it will develop and unfold at its own time. We cannot expect to impose deadlines, academic calendars, and exhibition timeframes to the work.

This is iterative. — It is a process. The work is never really done.

Idealism is a virtue. — Never be ashamed of the fact that you earnestly believe that art can change the world.

Be where you are in the work. — I mean this emotionally and physically. It is important to work where you live, and to be aware of your limitations and motivations.

Leave room for x quantities. — In the spirit of Sister Corita Kent's Rules for the Art Department at Immaculate Heart College we should understand that the rules we set are good guidelines, but not to be restrictive to our growth and work. Always leave plenty of room for 'X quantities.' As she writes, 'there should be new rules next week.'

We keep going, we keep doing, we keep learning. There is no one way, and there is no road map, but we have many people on this same journey. Thank you for making the choice to take this path together.

We make the road by walking,
Anonymous

A short reflection on a couple of current projects

Lauren Velvick

Newly resident in Hull, which is fresh from its stint as City of Culture in 2017, I recently attended a panel discussion on regeneration at Ground, a community art space. I'm here to work at the contemporary art gallery that was opened as a pop up last year but has now been granted three years funding by The Arts Council, and so in many ways I typify the gentrifying artist, or the art washing hipster. Speaking on the panel was Stephen Pritchard, an academic and activist who has written extensively on the ways that capitalist development practices co-opt the efforts of socially-engaged artists towards art washing. At one point he states emphatically that 'people always think I'm blaming artists, but I'm not, it's never the artists' fault — never, it's always the council', going on to explain that the way land-use is planned decades in advance means that both developers and artists have little say in what they're responding to. For my argument here I would add funders, along with councils, to the list of agencies whose plans and decisions drive the actions of everyone else, as well as an art world that is homogeneous in terms of race and class.

It's a common lament amongst artists that the big funders, the arts councils and local authorities, only want to fund certain kinds of art. With austerity having been imposed by central government, monetary support has been stripped back and the public have been encouraged towards suspicion and hostility. Within this climate, projects with definite timelines, clear narratives, and imagery that conforms to current trends will obviously be easier for agencies to fund than those exhibiting uncertainties, if not necessarily easier for communities to engage with. It is important to understand how these factors interact to reproduce projects that may either have no long term effect at all, or actively alienate participants.

Reflecting on two recent projects that they had worked on or adjacent to as a freelancer, an artist and researcher associate of mine describes the dangers of artists imposing, rather than testing a theoretical hypothesis. Outlining how in one instance an artist had taken the realities of how women's work has historically been overlooked, and imposed a practice of feminist historical revisionism upon a community who were already aware and in control of their narrative, with self organised women's and young people's community groups. Whereas in another project, seeking to address the frighteningly high instance of male suicide in one particular region, an artist has been slowly and carefully taking the lead from the community, developing a language that is useful and appropriate for discussing and expressing these people's issues, rather than casting themselves as saviour.

Both of the examples given above are funded and underway, and both artists are working in a way that can be called 'socially engaged', but the contrasts between the two exemplify the importance of taking a lead from the people that, frankly put, socially engaged artists use as material for their work. There is a demand for these sorts of projects and practices to be confined within an aesthetic that the art world understands; thus ensuring further work for the artist, and a positive, linear narrative that funders understand and can promote as successful; thus guarding

against public outrage. These conflicting pressures serve to exclude possibilities, and encourage practitioners to shy away from outcomes that don't reflect their initial hypothesis, which can unfortunately lead to ignoring the most interesting specifics of a situation to avoid complicating the narrative.

**Dear
Social Works,**

After a year of burn out and injury in 2017, I realised I needed to find a different way of doing socially engaged art so that I could carry on. I made a pledge to myself at the beginning of 2018 to enact 'good play' — to embrace the fun, the joyful, the mischievousness, the experimental — the things that sustain me as a human and as an artist — and to consciously use these as strategies in my work with people. I re-read Nato Thompson's excellent book 'Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century' and was struck by what he calls the 'Spectrum of Legibility' — the 'irreconcilable' ends of a spectrum which places ambiguity on one end and the didactic on the other:

'when is a socially engaged work of art too obvious? And when is it too confusing?… the didactic is obvious, and the ambiguous is opaque, what the didactic gains in clarity, the ambiguous gains in obscurity'

This year, I feel better. But I find myself wondering, is it possible

~ not to be clear

~ to dream of being non-utilitarian

~ to be absurd

~ to be irrational

~ to be ambiguous

and still do the meaningful, impactful work required in these divided and terrifying times we find ourselves in?

**Yours
Anonymous**

Righting on Social Art Practice

R.M Sánchez-Camus

This text is a manifesto and an invitation. A provocation and an instigation. In thinking through how and why we right and write on socially engaged arts practice, I offer some options for the advocates of art works created within and with community to respond with pieces of text that may fit certain pre-existing formats. This thinking is dedicated and offered to the field workers, the practitioners, the artists, and the activists who engage with people through their creative practice. In mirroring the vision of the Social Art Summit in Sheffield to bring us together to find out how loud the shared voice can be, now is the time to instigate our collective thinking into writings, that can help further the sector, cross pollinate ideas, and strengthen the voice of the artist. In order to develop the idea of the Summit we've worked for two years volunteering our time as artists and thinkers to answer some of the urgent questions that came from our peer forum meet ups around artists working in collaborative or cooperative practices. The Social Art Network is a new-born calf struggling to stand but already twice all our body weights combined. Through this fledging endeavour we now have a chance to come together as practitioners and support each other to grow stronger. The Network is your network.

I begin by asking, how does the language we use to describe what we do help define the boundaries of the practice and identify the work within the creative sector? Does this potentially put up barriers towards expansion, innovation and rebellion? We need text and language to understand, analyse, categorise and

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critique. Yet when we embark on all these modes of learning we pigeonhole, stereotype, and box. To list is to limit. We are still at the early stages of recognising the importance of art and artists embedded within the social sphere and its imperative that we give voice to the struggles, triumphs and failures that take place and honour and support the people doing the work. What we need is to consider each other allies to strengthen the field. This can be any one interested in the intersection between how art has merged with people. While we read and reference books about the fantastic works being done abroad and applying them to our specific context, the times we are living in both globally and locally have very specific challenges and questions around who we are and what we stand for. If we are creating work with people and putting our finger on the pulse of society, what is our blood pressure reading? How is this very act defining and redefining cultural output today? And what does this mean within the current UK context?

There has always been an interest if not obsession with the artist and art movements such as the avant-garde. Historically the beginnings of many creative movements were messy, confusing, had multiple directions and voices, and pushed against leading or being led. The creating of the work was the imperative, the changing of the time lived and the challenge of the status quo. Throughout the history of art we can see that radical change in what we value and how we produce work is soon followed by an onslaught of attention through thinking and writing on the subject. What I predict is that 100 years from now when we have settled into a technological autocracy and look back at the cultural output of the age of late hyper capitalism, it will be artists who have taken the step to refute the economic system of material product development for profit and instead spent their time, energy and resources in feeding the hungry desire of social connectivity that will own the true avant-garde of art making. The rest will be if not laughable, then just disappointing. As Seth Honnor said recently at a seminar we spoke at on socially engaged practice for Freedom Festival: 'to create works of art that are anti-socially engaged is an act of terrorism'.

We have many moments of coming together in the sector in the United Kingdom, the last few years have seen an explosion of conference, symposia, and talks. The natural next step and conclusion from these get-togethers of minds dedicated to understanding the how and why of community led arts initiatives is to make history by archiving the findings. Publishing accounts both short and long, informing the younger creative practitioners of how and why the work is being made, spending time unpicking the historical moment in the time that we are in and why this is so relevant for the future forms the archive and writes/rights the history. This also helps larger institutions in the arts and in government hear the voice from the grassroots, from the large population of citizens who come across art work embedded in their neighbourhoods, in their streets, in their estates, even in their homes and feedback what exactly it means to not just observe culture but co-produce it. We need to publish those voices in our texts. Lets work together to imagine, create then disseminate *radical evaluation*, by this I mean an evaluative process that comes from within the co-creators of work and finds ways to measure things such as solidarity and empathy. The questions can be asked by the participants, developed in collaboration with the artists, sent up through the organisations, who can then collate the data for the large funding bodies both governmental and private. Words sifted into tangible evidence that is itself a critique coming from the ground up.

Lets explore the ways that all of us interested in the field can empower the sector through our collective efforts at building a body of texts. As a call to action the ask is that we consider where our own strengths lie in producing texts about practice, about our own practice, about others practice, and where we can disseminate these texts. Can we think about writing as a collective action that we can undertake together? Can we look to each other as colleagues and comrades in developing this voice and supporting each other? Can we push ourselves each and every one of us to make sure that over the next two years in the build up to the first Social Art Biennale we dedicate time to putting our thoughts down on paper? Our ideas on how we approach social engagement, what it means to us, why we do

it, the challenges and rewards. If we were able to tap into this hive mind, and push our textual output the data we could compile would be tremendous.

A few examples of how each of us can deliver our ideas into words could be a critical review of a socially engaged project, a research book looking at current and historical lineage of practice, perhaps compiled guidelines for involvement and engagement including ethical standards and methods of delivery, or journal articles for or about the work or the artist or this notion of a field we are developing. Alternative ways could be social media, blogs, 280 character micro-essays, and captions on work as essays we archive and share. I'm very interested in knowing how artists are approaching creative writings that have been developed for a project, about a project, through a project, after a project, or a dream project not realised. Maybe its simple field reporting, interview transcriptions, and radical evaluation ideas that we pass around.

The next steps would be to collate. To create platforms and exchanges where we can find and share these words. It's wonderful that there are many organisations that want to support artists and multiple platforms for these words to be found, but there is worth in being able to consolidate the information that is out there so that we have a better understanding of who we are and how we are working. This is an attempt to chant together in unison and hear our voice amongst others. Lets expand on the potential ways to approach this call to action:

1. Your Words Here

Develop written text that theorises the hows and whys of the socially engaged component of your specific practice. What makes it unique, what motivates you, how have you failed and how have you found satisfaction in your creative process? If we were able to capture this process-thinking across all the mediums we work in and share the knowledge, we would strengthen the network and learn from each other.

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2. Peer Feedback Reviews

Write critical reviews for colleagues. This is a practice that we should all be undertaking. Finding feedback on your work around social engagement can be really challenging. There is often a sense of celebrating practice and not risking enough valuable constructive criticism. How does the work fit into the larger narrative of artistic historical lineage? How does the work push boundaries around what we consider creative practice? How does the work tell or retell narratives of, about, and from a shared community? How does the work match its original intention or potentially deviate as a matter of creative process? These and a myriad of other questions help us to unpick what it is we understand the work to be when it unfolds in the social sphere. Social Art Practice is a term but not a genre. It encompasses more of a strategy than a creative vision. Artists who work in collaboration with communities are experts in a number of different mediums, but have successfully identified social processes as the core of the practice.

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3. Publishing Power

We have various new publications launched this year at the Social Art Summit. As creative practitioners our voices should be central to the conversation. Journals don't need institutional affiliation to publish, my last publication in the Journal of Arts and Communities simply listed myself as Artist. I did this as an intervention project, as a way to ensure that our voices are heard alongside the experts. If its useful and you did a PhD add

the Dr, those in academia for whom this is important give these credentials weight. No matter your tactics for visibility, the way to create inroads in building the network for social practice in the UK is for your words to go on to paper and for that paper to be distributed. This is a simple way to archive exactly where we are today and where we are going. Submit abstracts to journals that don't usually represent artist voices. Write that article even if you aren't confident with your words and then engage in a heated debate with the peer reviewers, don't just accept their reviews for communication is two ways. Fight for the case. We have knowledge of the field because we are working in the field not just writing about it. Those expert texts being published in the next few years need to be from the field workers or in the least include our voices.

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4. The Social in Media

Publishing words in 249 characters or less is todays more powerful communication tool. If our work agreed on the hashtag *SocialArtUK* would we then suddenly be able to subscribe to, read, and be aware of every small encounter happening across the country. This is such an easy way to make sure the photo you post, the tweet you send, the thoughts you share are picked up by the larger and growing community of artists, activists, producers, funders and supporters of the sector. Even in naming the Social Art Network and the Social Art Summit there was tussling with the words socially engaged and collaborative working their way in, but in the end we went with a term that would help link all the various voices in the room. Our intention was always to come together as peers to listen, share and support each other. Through *#SocialArtUK* we could know each other, meet each other, follow each other, learn from each other all remotely. What if we all took on the hashtag for our projects, thoughts and observations? There would suddenly be so many of us out there. The network isn't an institution its an invitation, it only exists if we help it grow.

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5. Creative Writing and Writing Creatively

I am desperate to read more words, words and words created with, around, from, in, about, before and after community. I want to know all the ways we are creatively using texts to understand a place, to understand ourselves, to understand the world. Do creative uses of text in social art need to even make any sense, can it be non-sense, can it be poetic, can it be verbal collage, can it be transgressive, hypnotic, healing, scaring, informative, distopic, stolen or miss pelt? Can we spend time with your words? Thinking about how they fit or didn't into a work of art you made. Can we share those words with each other, find sources and outlets to disseminate? Can someone's transcription of conversations on a park bench, be someone else's script for a one to one performance? Lets create a shared resource of creative writing that is born out of the contact artists make with individuals and groups of people. And lets be fearless and generous in sharing that with each other.

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6. Press The Media Button

How can we have conversations with the critics who review gallery and museum exhibitions, theatre shows, dance pieces, and teach them that when they come to see a work on social engagement, if they don't take time to engage with the generative process, they'll never appreciate the final work. What if we all made it our mission to try to talk to the press people we know to explain to them how the field works, to think together about ways to bring them on board. This is less about sending press releases, and more about a different kind of visibility. Maybe the press isn't about the art work we are trying to make but about the stories embedded in the work. Lets have a think about how we reframe what we are asking press to do when they respond to this practice. Reframe the offer. Treat the press as a socially engaged project.

The intention with this provocation and invitation is to begin dissecting how we use language and words and where we place them in order to strengthen a common cause of ensuring

the value and understanding of social art practice in the UK continues to grow. Of course there will be growing pains, and of course there will be moans of how its existed for years. But the sector is expanding, the interest in the field is expanding, the key players are growing, budgets for the work and for institutions is growing so now is a good time for artists to own the language. Words, text and how we use it can be the first step in making sure that the work around social art practice is talked about and considered from our perspective. The first hand accounts of those who are working to develop practice directly in the social front, and often outside of institutional boundaries. The publication of this journal and the essays inside are a step towards this, but we can each own our own ways to disseminate text and words. Please get in touch with the Social Art Network and let us know how you're getting on, what tactics you're using and how we can work together to share resources. We're all in it together…

Marcelo

**Dear
Social Works,**

The programme I manage in a Local Authority was set up to support artists by offering advice sessions, networking, workshops and promotion to a wider audience. Over this time I've noticed that the more active the artist is in engaging with social and political issues in the community they serve, the less likely they are to think about their own worth in that ecology and look after themselves as part of the bigger picture.

My own practice has become a creative journey to find out how best to support artists who are socially engaged, who devote their time, energy and invariably money often at the expense of their own wellbeing. In Brazil and in the Netherlands I've come across some interesting similar programmes of support that ensure the wellbeing of artists along with the communities they engage. Of course the situation radically varies from country to country.

So now I'm interested in how we share best practice in this area not just nationally but also internationally. How do others out there tackle these issues and how can we better nurture those that focus outside themselves, often contributing to society's well-being but not their own?

**Yours sincerely
Anon**

ROUTINE, 2018:

Fragments of a process from the participants' perspectives

They Are Here

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Context

ROUTINE is an artwork by They Are Here comprised of a series of workshops and performances that took place across Spring and Summer 2018. In February we circulated an invitation to community activist groups across London, including Migrants Organise, IRMO Brixton, the Independent Workers Union, X-Talk and the Latin American Women's Rights Service to attend a series of free stand-up comedy workshops, led by professional comedian Logan Murray. This invitation was also circulated via social media, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook from our own pages and amplified by the networks of organisation partners and co-commissioners which included Studio Voltaire, Block Universe, May Day Rooms, Battersea Arts Centre and Somerset House. Between April and May 2018, the participating group attended 10 weekly sessions in different locations across London. The workshops culminated in a weekend of stand-up at the gallery Studio Voltaire, temporarily transformed into a comedy club for three nights. Each participant performed a 5 minute routine. The evenings were compared by *The White Pube*, the collaborative identity of Gabrielle de la Puente and Zarina Muhammad under which they write criticism. There were 19 different workshop attendees in total, some only attending a taster session. Nine committed to the two month process and seven performed live over the three nights. These nine were all offered a stipend equivalent to the London Living Wage for each of the two hour workshop sessions, rehearsal and performances.

In 2015, we initiated BANK, a co-enquiry with seven other artists, to explore the language, systems and technologies of the financial and economic system. This was initially supported by the Live Art Development Agency. After 18 months this led to a new They Are Here work, The People Behind The Financial System: *London* (2016) commissioned by The Southbank Centre. This artwork was comprised of informal encounters between 24 individuals working in the financial sector and the wider public. Over a 2 hour period, attendees were invited to engage in ten conversations of their choice, each lasting 10 minutes. These 24 representatives ranged from politicians and stockbrokers to algorithm coders and security van drivers. They also included interpretations of historical or contemporary figures such as Karl Marx, John Maynard Keynes and the (possibly fictional) creator of the online currency Bitcoin, Satoshi Nakamoto. *The People Behind the Financial System* sought to create an open environment for idea exchange and argument, towards democratising the specialist knowledge and hidden transactions that impact us all. A second edition of the work was later commissioned by Konsthall C in Stockholm. Research into the financial system, especially focusing on key decision-makers in the system: bankers, traders, multinational corporations, politicians and legislators brought focus on the agents in a system *producing* precarity through the maintenance of economic policies that aid the accumulation, generation and centralisation of wealth.

Precarity Centre (2016–ongoing) and *40 Temps, 8 Days* (2017) are both works that engage directly with those dealing with precarity in its many intersecting forms (including financial precarity, residency status, mental health and employment). *Precarity Centre* is an itinerant, conceptual framework for an interdisciplinary programme of talks, workshops and performances, exploring and mitigating against precarity. It is also an experiment in social space, seeding interaction between local groups, the arts community and those who work in the public sector. The project echoes the multi–layered activities of community centres, which continue to suffer disinvestment across London and the wider UK. *40 Temps, 8 Days* (2017) was a durational performance work at Tate Modern, which involved a daily rotation of 5 temps employed to do activities they would usually do in their spare time. These individuals were selected from a pool of incumbent temps on the books of Adecco, a multinational temp agency. Their paid work ranged from browsing the internet, listening to music, playing chess and video games. Drawing on our own experience of temping and zero-hour contracts, the work emerges from reflections on the impact of Neoliberalism on our valuation of time and the limitations of our 'time sovereignty'.

ROUTINE (2018) was conceptually developed in dialogue with these preceding works… Its title alludes to the phrase 'comedy routine', but contains an offer to break from other work and thought routines, to reflect on lived experiences of precarity through self-narration and humour. Parallel to the workshop activity we asked each participant to keep an informal 'process diary'; selections of these texts have been woven together to communicate the project from their perspectives.

Harun Morrison & Helen Walker
They Are Here, 2018

Minni [22.03.18]

Heyyyy,

Noooo I missed today's newbie gathering, is there a chance to join you guys next week still??

I'd be keen and shit scared to do something in the field of comedy. Not that I would have any skills or previous experience whatsoever, but I'm pretty good at causing awkward silence and got sweaty hands when needed.

What are the next steps? (I've already tried meditation and medication).

Cheers,
-Minni

H. [23.03.18]

Hello there,

I just saw a link on the comedy collective group about your workshops. I'd love to join! Just tried two open mic nights but I'd really like some advice.

I'm a sex worker and am very keen to use comedy as a way to share the information and demystify the industry.

Many thanks.

Bianca [27.04.18]

Knowing by the message I received of this workshop, that you needed serious people I thought I was serious enough to take part. Theatre and similar things I really like but never before have given myself the opportunity to see it or take part in any event.

I really wanted to learn perfect English, but only now I am convinced that it is impossible, then maybe through comedy, fun, relaxation, I may advance another five points in my very old adventure. Sometimes I feel I am forgetting the language instead of learning, not forgetting that at the same time I am becoming deaf.

Having fun with so many stupid ideas, walking like zombies in a room, shouting the names of things, acting without acting, has given me a bit of encouragement to keep going back as maybe it will help not only with the language but being sociable and understanding others and you never know, I might be a good comic by the end . All of it is a really new experience in my life and have to say I do enjoy it very much, although I seem lost many times as my sensitive brain cannot cope with so many things and I have not worked/socialized with English speakers for a long time. I am very lucky I have retain in my brain some of the English language I learned in the last century.

Each session is different and each one gives me *coraje* to return to the next one. Lost or not lost for understanding everything we discuss is part of a Laughing Matter workshop. I do enjoy it, and I will attend as much as I can.

Lissette [11.04.18]

Nos hemos reunido en Somerset House Studios el grupo ha incrementado con personas talentosas. Harun y Helen han vuelto a dar la introducción y Logan ha hecho nuevas dinámicas con el grupo. Una de mis compañeras es Sudamericana igual yo, realmente me alegra mucho. Hicimos una dinámica en la que trabajamos en pareja, uno debía empezar con el rol de menos y llegar a ser lo máximo. Con mi pareja nos ha tocado ser una pareja que se comprometía, siento que pude dar más o pudo quedar mejor. Realmente siento mucho temor con cada sesión, me doy cuenta que el idioma es una barrera porque siento que no me logro expresar al 100%. Volveré asistir la siguiente semana porque realmente me gusta el taller y siento que lo puedo lograr, esto es algo que me entretiene y me llena.

H [18.04.18]

I can't express quite how the first session of the comedy workshop filled me full of such joy and optimism. I left feeling very charged and ended up bouncing around my house for several hours afterwards to the annoyance of my cat.

Ananda [24.04.18]

It was during this session that the cold hard reality that I would be standing in front of a crowd of strangers and friends in a few weeks' time, desperate to make them laugh, really hit home. I'm determined to do it, and what better place than at one of my favourite galleries, but still... what if I'm awful? Actually, even if I am really terrible, I don't think I'll regret it. Again I froze during the improv exercise, and marvelled at people's ability to push through and say something funny — or at least say something at all! I like Logan, and trust when he says he thinks we've all got it in us to do this. I'm so totally going to call him on it if he's wrong about that (I really do hope he's right).

Looloo [24.04.18]

Dear H+H,

The second workshop was interesting. The novelty of the first one waded quite quickly, and the sense of impending doom and hard work ahead wafted across the room like a bad smell. But personally, I'm an emotional masochist so I feel quite happy. My rival is still speaking too much, and they need more unique material. At least by discussing personal flaws in the session, I've got something on them...

Russell [4.05.18]

I thought the session was good, as always I really liked the games, they seemed really meaningful for learning how to develop comedy. However, all in all, though I did enjoy being there with the group and having fun I did find this session to be the most problematic. One of the reasons I joined was based on the notion of being able to talk about the realities of our situations. I don't really care about bringing out my 'inner idiot' aside from in an effort to package real things.

The part of comedy I probably dislike the most is the hoards of idiots chatting asinine shit, though maybe I am a bit too serious. However, my understanding of the premise of these workshops was to learn about how we might be able to speak about our truths rather than to just say random things to make an audience laugh.

I'm not really here to make full bellied western liberal audiences laugh but more in a hope to that by making these spoilt brats laugh I could have a moment to speak some truths about really awful realities of the world people don't like to think about. *Then* to make them laugh so they don't hate me for it — or something like that. I would have liked Logan to have had more of a look at how this could function — rather than having it brushed off as 'trying to be smart' or 'trying to make an art piece'.

Still though, I do think this whole thing has been pretty amazing so I'd like to thank you big time and I'll, of course, be coming to all the other workshops. Logan has given me some advice on how I can do what I want — though I guess it is a big ask, and he seems very generous with us being able to phone him and stuff so I'll probably be trying to do that in the next two weeks. Much love.

Ananda [1.05.18]

I liked that we had a writing assignment and could come with something prepared. I was terrified to speak in front of the group, and conscious that I'd written a lot, so didn't want to take up the workshop's time. But I'm glad I read it — got through the whole thing, got a few laughs, and basically, got it out of my system. I'm still finding the disconnect between the ease I feel being chatty and funny in real life and the nervousness I feel when I'm asked to perform very frustrating. But also, rather fascinating. What causes this? I'm also struggling with the idea of play; I know it's integral to the process, and relaxing into the space and the people and your own mind and body is key — but I'm not there yet. I keep wanting to 'get it right'. Still, there is a sense of unlocking a secret part of yourself, learning something — trying to figure it out and mould it (if only a little). Stroll on scratch comedy night!

Looloo [1.05.18]

Dear H²,

This week's session was quite similar to the previous weeks. We all enjoy the performing side, so while I hope I stay anonymous admitting this, I hope that next week will have less speaking and more doing (love Logan though!). My nemesis didn't turn up, which actually lightened up the group drastically. Everything just felt so much more positive and collaborative — it was fantastic! PS. Three people didn't turn up, so their identity will remain a secret, although 5% of me hopes that they return...

See you tomorrow!

H [9.05.18]

So I had a bit of a realisation the last couple of weeks. I've been so excited about the comedy and this course I've been nattering to all my friends and family about it, who of course have been equally enthusiastic and all wanting to know when they can come and see me perform. This filled me with glee and joy until it struck me. Crap, I'm gonna have to come out, again, to a lot of people who don't necessarily know the details of my work. My family are incredibly supportive, but up until now I've mostly told them just about being a dominatrix, they don't know about my escorting or full service work or that I regularly get tied up and beaten by older gentleman for cash. Other people, such as my singing teacher want to come and see me, but she thinks I'm a personal trainer!

I think it's incredibly important that I use this platform of comedy to talk about all areas of my work, including the full service stuff. What better way to help demystify the bishness than laughter. I've felt for a long time my privilege of having supportive family and friends means I have to talk publicly. Most of my comrades don't have that luxury, one of the reasons the sex worker debate is so biased, most sex workers just can't talk openly.

So basically I'm preparing myself for a second coming out to my family and friends. If the comedy goes well then in the long term I'm steeling myself to be a public figure with all the abuse on social media that follows. I have a few difficult conversations to have. But it's ok, I'm ready. I want to be open, I hate having to censor myself constantly. And it will be worth it if I can just change a few opinions on my way.

H.

Katerina [10.06.18]

Hi, I am so glad to be here!
I was sooooo excited to be part of this project!
When I found out I can take part in a comedy workshop I was ecstatic!
I spent several nights writing my life — in jokes…
or so I thought.
Then during the workshop – great stuff by the way — I realised I am *Very* bad at writing jokes.

I mean I was bad at writing at school but I thought maybe I outgrew it… But… No.

What I really know now is…that I am NUTS.

But at the end of the day… funny things happen to everybody. So. Here we go…

Russell [2.07.18]

I never did stand up comedy before never spoke through a microphone to a room full of people before. I did some small public speaking stuff at work and it always freaked me out. It was great having Logan take us through everything and it was lovely having this format of community art where everyone is still talking to each other a month on from the show. The idea of paying people to do something they liked was great as well, especially for those of us who sell a lot of our time doing things we'd rather not.

I found everyone incredibly open, I felt I was given a space to have fun and be myself and it seemed everyone else did as well, I learned a lot from it and even changed my views on a number of difficult topics through trying to listen to people in good faith.

After the experience, I had a speech to make at an old friend's wedding and where I managed to make the room laugh a good few times and a friend told me how taken back he was at my public speaking — something that I quite dreaded beforehand.

The experience helped me overcome fears and anxieties and has enriched many aspects of my life. I'm thankful for having had the chance to meet so many great people and learn so many interesting things.

Bianca [3.09.18]

Personally the workshop process was extremely rewarding, an eye opener something I didn't know I could do. As daunting as I thought this process would be I can honestly say it has brought up the funny charismatic outgoing childish yet shy Bianca that was hidden inside of me for so many years. Although I am a working progress, I would very much like to continue whenever possible.

I wish I had done this many years ago as it is a very engaging process that has allowed me not only to meet extraordinary people, but also to feel more confident about myself under the different circumstances life presents to us on a daily basis.

I truly hope my participation has somehow manage to put a smile on your faces.

Minni [6.09.18]

Life is more fun when you forget yourself and play and experiment instead. Doing stand-up is still nerve-racking but looks like I cannot keep away from it. Through the course I met a bunch of my kinda people, and since then we've set up a comedy group and are currently planning on doing more shows together. After the course I've performed at The Edinburgh Fringe, have been interviewed on television and done a charity stand-up show.

They Are Here
Stand-Up Comedy
E-Flyer

About the Comedians

Minni Karttunen

A Finnish freelancer juggling video production, journalism and festival bar management. Wanted to break boundaries by trying the scariest form of art: stand-up. Always exploring, be it parkour, travelling or finding quirky stories. Untamed imagination. Dinosaur advocate. Created her very own time zone.

Bianca Ives

Born in Bogatá, Bianca has lived in London for 42 years and currently works as a laundry assistant. Previously she ran a hamburger bar and owned her own laundrette. She's also been a bus and minicab driver. She has a son. Bianca likes to sew and swim and loves jigsaw puzzles. She came across They Are Here through Integrating Women UK, a group that connects Latin American people in London.

Russell Pavlincova

Russell was born in South London. He is of Czech and Tibetan heritage and recently graduated from Goldsmiths. He is an artist and is active in community organisation and also makes political memes. He keeps his head above water with data analysis, catering and as a Deliveroo courier.

Ekaterina Belcheva

Bulgarian immigrant Ekaterina Belcheva went from part-time cleaning work to setting up a successful ethical cleaning company of her own, turning down business offers as she kept to her principles in order to make cleaning business green business. 10 years later Ultimately Eco Cleaning is continuing to grow and serving domestic and commercial clients all around London. Our motto is healthy, ethical and green cleaning.

Ananda Pellerin

Ananda is a French-Canadian, Italian-American woman, who has been living in London for fifteen years. She is a writer and editor, with a focus on art, culture, food and philosophy. She is an ageless vampire who actively avoids the sun, preferring the coolness of darkened rooms and company with a darkened sense of humour, originally from Montreal.

Lissette Mestanza

Lissette Isabel Mestanza Iñiga is 23 years old, from Ecuador and living in London for two years. At the moment, she's learning English to go to university and study medicine, her dream in life. She currently works as a cleaner part-time to pay the bills. She's also part of a group of young Latin American women in London. She never imagined doing stand-up comedy in English in her life!

Looloo Jack

Looloo moved to London from the West Midlands, growing up in a Polish migrant household and now works in social media. He's in his late 20s, dyspraxic, an only child, East Midlander and the self-described Beyoncé/Cheryl Tweedy of the group :)

H.

H. is an British sex worker in her early thirties. She has been working in all areas of the industry for seven years, but these days mostly specialises in fetish services. When not working, she can be found riding her unicycle and playing punk music loudly. She is also heavily involved in the sex workers communities as an advocate and activist, particularly through working with the sex workers radio station, Radio Ava.

About They Are Here

They Are Here **(f. 2006) is a collaborative practice steered by Helen Walker and Harun Morrison, currently based in London and on the River Lea. Their recent projects, performances and exhibitions include** *40 Temps, 8 Days*, *Tate Modern*, **London;** *The People Behind The Financial System: Sweden*, **Konsthall C, Stockholm;** *PLEASE IDENTIFY YOURSELF*, **Furtherfield, London;** *Tantalus*, **Victoria & Albert Museum, London (all 2017);** *Precarity Centre: B5 5RS*, **Grand Union, Birmingham;** *Offshore Transactions*, **River Lea, UP Projects (both 2016) and** *Location Scouts*, **South London Gallery, London (2015). In June 2016, They Are Here co–founded** *Ayandeh Garden*, **a community–growing project in Finsbury Park involving young adult refugees and asylum seekers.**

@theyarehereyeah

www.theyarehere.net

*Lessons
Learnt*

Jody Wood

These are all lessons I learned along my journey making socially engaged art, and may be relevant for artists wishing to work with communities they are outside of:

1. Showing care doesn't mean making someone's problems go away. Being present, consistent, and honest in the face of chaos, trauma, and change goes a long way in showing care. Understand that no matter how much you 'feel' for this community, you are not in their position and you can never truly relate with their reality. No one needs your pity or guilt. Recognize and accept that your limits are also your strengths — then you can offer true care.

2. If you aim to make work with depth and meaning for your participants, the best research is attentive observation. Get in a position where you're allowed to observe as much as possible. People will allow you to engage in this kind of observation if they trust you and connect with you, and they'll trust you if you're transparent with your intentions and show that you're willing to devote time and attention to their community.

3. Accept that you will fuck up and things won't go as planned. Sometimes it might feel like you aren't allowed to fuck up because you're working with people, not materials. But free yourself up from this kind of paralysis. Relationships are imperfect. Art is imperfect. Connections are worthwhile nonetheless.

4. Your project can't be called art until you've transformed something. This transformation can have qualities that are internal, intangible, relational, perceptual, or temporary. Just because you've altered something doesn't mean it's transformed. Transformation is a metamorphosis.

5. Find a balance between adjusting your process based on community feedback, and believing in your vision despite initial resistance. It can be incredibly difficult to navigate at first, but it each project gives you a little more wisdom in this regard.

6. Be suspicious of claiming to 'help' others. This is loaded terminology.

7. The fastest way to lose the trust of the community you're working with is to over-promise, over-extend yourself, and not follow through.

*Relative
Poverty*

Les Monaghan

Artist Commission

I began *Relative Poverty* (2016–18) as a collaborative art project in response to the lack of media coverage of the 2016 Joseph Rowntree Foundation report on destitution. The project aimed to give voice to Doncaster locals enduring destitution. My written notes and documentary photographs eventually became the medium for this. The work is disseminated through exhibition installations in libraries, churches, meeting halls, schools, and conferences, through www.relativepoverty.org and a pamphlet. I have worked with *Dave* since May 2016. He chose to be shown anonymously. For the *Social Works?: Open* commission I proposed to revisit him and bring his story up to date. The major piece is a photo essay of him journeying to town to pay his Bedroom Tax, it can be found at www.relativepoverty.org/portfolios/daves-story/

I also proposed to document him and I reviewing our work as part of the commission. The issue of informed consent has haunted my practice since it began– and should concern all those who work with documentary. Photographs live on after their making. Their meanings shift through the contexts in which they are shown but also through the unknowable future prisms with which they are viewed. Ethically, I wanted him to agree that each photograph I present is a fair reflection of his life right now. And I want to include his voice in the debate about how 'he' might be viewed in the future.

As *Dave* is dyslexic he said he'd prefer not to write about working with me but he was happy to be interviewed. We recorded ourselves looking through the photo essay —

Les 'You tell me if this is kind of looks like a fair representation of your morning'

Dave 'Well, yeah, that's what I have to do every morning' [that he pays bedroom tax]

Les 'Is this a fair representation of Balby?'

Dave 'Yeah, first thing in morning when I'm up there… that's me sat on bus'

Les 'Would you say this is you, this is your walk?'

Dave 'Yeah. Yeah.'

Les 'If people see this what do you think they might think?'

Dave 'Well I'm doing my normal thing, me daily thing… I go in early, go in, get done, and I've got the rest of the day to me sen.'

For me this exchange, and the one below, tells me that the photographs for *Dave* are a direct representation of the real.

Les 'What do you get out of me working with you?'

Dave 'It just gives me somebody to talk to, and let's me get all my built up complaints and moans about dole, and social services and everything… and get rid of all that lot really… and somebody to understand what I'm going through'

Les 'My plan for it [Relative Poverty] was to let people know about lives like yours'

Dave 'Yeah, yeah it's genuine… look, it's like I said to you, I'm a genuine person I'm down to earth. What I do is what I do every day that's how I go about it. I can't do any other, I can't change it. I'm not a snob and I'm not clever. Right. If I feel like making a bench for lady over road cos she helped me out wi cats. So I made her a bench… And she cried her eyes out. I think she's been here four months. She said to me, 'that's the first time somebody's…' I said, 'well, you helped me, I was short of money… you got me flea powder for me… and you trusted me to give you money… and I give you money on Tuesday I got paid and that were it. Why can't I make you a table for saying thank you?… Yeah, I'm happy wi what I do. I keep me sen to me sen. I take me time, and do what I have to'

We are now looking at photographs of installations of Relative Poverty.

Les 'So are you happy being a representative? Because that's kind of what I'm making you [into]'

Dave 'Yeah'

Les 'Look. Here's you with your hand out in Edlington Library. There's you at Scawthorpe Library, there's you at Donny Minster, holding out your hand…'

Dave 'It's like I said to you. I wouldn't lie to you. What I've got in me pocket is what I've got. I've got nothing else, I'm not smart, I'm not clever. All the money I've got is all paid out… I've got the same bloody clothes as I ever had. I'm genuine. You can ask me and I'll be honest with you. If I can do it, I'll do it'

Les 'If I take straightforward pictures of you, documentary basically, you're happy with that because there's no misrepresentation?'

Dave 'It's straightforward. Why lie? I'm not bothered about people coming and stopping me… only thing that I've got against it is, well what I say, snobs. "Oh yeah he's putting it on", or any of my mates… most of them know that I won't lie, most of them know what situation I'm in because most of them have been there thee sens. I think most of them are jealous because I've got somebody who's trying to help and trying to show a bigger picture of everybody in situations wi dole and that. Andww they can't see they should come to such a person like me… when they say, "he's putting it on" and stuff like that. I think, hang on, I went to school wi you, you know what I were like. I were bullied everyday, you were bullies. So why say I'm making it up when you know what I'm telling you is right?'

Les 'Well, particularly for your case 'cos I'd always wanted you to be part of the project because of your age, how you'd worked, where you'd worked, what you'd done, [to counteract the claims of] "oh they don't do any work"'.

Relative Poverty continues in various forms and will be exhibited at Sheffield Cathedral 15th October–19th November 2018.

POZ?

Joe Cotgrave
Artist Commission

For *Social Works?: Open*, Joe printed 100 limited edition prints of a zine he made in collaboration with YPAS' (the Young Person's Advisory Service in Liverpool, UK) LGBT+ Youth Project, where participants developed an educational resource to provide information, advice and support about issues relating to HIV and sexual health. Paper copies of the limited editions will appear in the first 100 copies of the *Social Works?: Open* journal. For more information about the project see:

www.ypas.org.uk/our-services/support-services/lgbt-project/

www.josephcotgrave.uk

www.josephcotgrave.bigcartel.com

Twitter: @JosephCotgrave @YPASLiverpool

**Front and back cover
of *POZ?*, limited zine.**

With special thanks to the Models of Validation Stakeholder Forum and all those who generously gave up their time to be interviewed, all the writers, including the anonymous letter writers (you know who you are), the artists, the funders and dust collective.