

Helen Kilby Nelson
Multidisciplinary Artist
Warwickshire & West Midlands

Practice Overview

Helen Kilby Nelson is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice explores the intersections of identity, health, policy and place. Drawing on lived experience, research and archival material, her work examines how social, medical and institutional systems shape everyday life.

Her early work developed through socially engaged and participatory projects addressing housing, inequality and community voice. Since 2023 her practice has shifted toward a studio-based approach centred on mixed media assemblage, combining drawing, paint, text and textile materials to construct layered surfaces that hold fragments of research, documentation and lived experience.

Practice Timeline

2016 – 2022 | Socially Engaged Practice

Collaborative and participatory projects exploring housing, inequality and community voice through dialogue, workshops and community-led initiatives.

2022 – 2023 | Reflection and Archive

A period of reflection and return to earlier projects, research and documentation following illness, leading toward a renewed studio-based practice.

2023 – Present | Assemblage of Lived Systems

Assemblage-based practice working with text, textile and found materials, exploring lived experience within medical and institutional systems. Fragments of language and material are reconfigured to disrupt authority and examine how these systems are encountered and understood.

Education

2021 – 2022 (September to April)

MA Arts & Education Practices
Birmingham City University

2018

BA (Hons) Fine Art and Contemporary Cultures – First Class
University of Gloucestershire

2017

FdA Fine Art and Contemporary Cultures – Distinction
Birmingham City University

Recent Exhibitions

2023

Humanity – Outside In
Sotheby's, London
Project Ability, Glasgow
Brighton & Hove Museums, Brighton

2022

Invisible Cities: Dear Brum
Selfridges x Birmingham City University

2021

I Apostrophe S
Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art: HYPER-POSSIBLE, Coventry

2021

Lockdown Lullabies
LTB Showrooms, Coventry

2020

It Gets Lighter From Here: Resurgence
Vivid Projects & Culture Central

2020

Art & Activism: I Am Not
Outside In

2020

Art & Activism: This is Fucking Normal
Outside In

Pre-2020 exhibition history available on request.

Artist Residencies

2023

Susanna and the Elders
University of Brighton x Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

2021

School of Participation
Novi Sad x Walk the Plank x Coventry City of Culture, Serbia

Professional Development

2021

Storytelling for Artists
Social Art Library x Social Art Network

2020
Active Reality Research Lab
New Art West Midlands x New Art Gallery Walsall

2020
AD:vantage Leadership Programme
Lead With Advantage, Coventry

Programme Creation & Development

2022
Navigating Disaster – arts practice development educational game (co-creator)

2021
A Parallel State x Beyond the Anthropocene – co-curator
Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art

2021
A Parallel State x Doncaster Art Bomb – co-creator
Public Art Forum, Doncaster

2021
Working in the Public Realm – arts practice development educational game (co-creator)

2021
Speedy Crits – Programme Manager
Coventry Artspace

2020
S-o-A Community Art Project – creator, facilitator, curator

2020
Speedy Crits – online artist professional development programme (creator)

Community Collaborations

2021
Communi-Tea – co-curator
Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art

2021
Clopton Comedy Club – S-o-A Community Art Project
Stratford-upon-Avon

2022
Bishopton Primary School - S-o-A Community Art Project
Stratford-upon-Avon

Workshops

2019

Mock the Weak – workshop

Spam & Chips, Co-op(t) Arty Party 2: Integrate, Coventry

2019

What Do Artists Do All Day? – conversation

Arcadia Gallery, Coventry

2019

Re-imagining Monopoly – workshop

32 Brains, Arcadia Gallery, Coventry

Talks and Panels

2021

Arts and Activism – Arts Rising

Stratford-upon-Avon (invited speaker)

2021

Arts Lab Launch: Collaborative Art

Birmingham City University (invited speaker)

2021

Come Together

Hello Culture x Coventry (invited speaker)

2020

Artist Development Research Panel

Coventry Artspace (invited panel member)

2020

Digital & Gaming Roundtable

Birmingham 2020 (invited panel member)

Selected Publications

2021

Whose Story Is It Anyway?

Social Art Library

2020

Home Complex Home

Communiqué Four, Coventry Biennial

2019

Review – Twin Stranger: Entangled State

New Art West Midlands

2019
The Twin at Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art
Axisweb

2018–2019
Graduate Artist in Residence Blog
Coventry Artspace

2018
Shifting Ground – Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art publication

Selected Mentions

2021
AD:vantage Leadership Programme – Interview
New Art West Midlands

2021
Communiqué Five – Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art

2021
Top Ten Virtual Shows Across the UK & Ireland – Outside In
Frieze Magazine

2020
Studio Visit Artists Announced
New Art West Midlands

2019
Artist Spotlight Interview – Curating Coventry

2019
Digital Living – Axisweb Monthly Playlist

2019
360° Perpetuation – Axisweb Weekly Highlights

2019
For the Sake of a Shilling – Axisweb, Sound & Vision

2018
Worth//Less – Axisweb Weekly Highlights

2018
For the Sake of a Shilling – Prize Winner
Spon Spun Arts & Heritage Festival