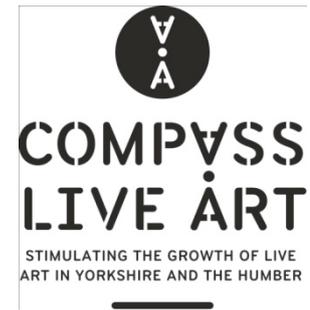


# FESTIVAL



## Compass Festival Report

Annie Lloyd March 2012

25 – 27 November 2011, Leeds

### *Introduction*

The Compass Festival was a week-end of live art events across the city of Leeds the aim of which was to engage as many people as possible and bring new people into contact with live art. The Festival was delivered alongside the Compass Symposium both of which examined art in the public realm and socially engaged practice.

*The festival was mostly located in public places where the work unfolded over a considerable period of time so that you didn't have to commit to being anywhere on the dot or book in advance. Anyone who wanted, including Symposium attendees, could see everything in a day. Durational practice was perfect for this. we wanted, as far as possible, for people to come across the work as they went about their usual business and for most of it to be free. In essence, to remove some key conventional barriers to art attendance: opportunity, location and price. But we needed the major input of Forced Entertainment and later Reckless Sleepers to create a cornerstone or headline around which to build. When these were in place we could develop the rest of the Festival with confidence*

### *Festival Programme*

**Forced Entertainment** And on the Thousandth Night...

Howard Assembly Room. A six hour semi improvised story-telling miracle rarely before seen in the UK. Extraordinary precision and collaborative listening, generosity, wit and astonishment. Many people came "just for an hour or so" and stayed right through.

**Reckless Sleepers** The Last Supper

West Yorkshire Playhouse. A mesmeric dinner party for 38 people including famous last words and last meal requests from death row prisoners. And earlier in the week, Schrodinger a brilliant re-working of their acclaimed work from 10 years ago.

The rest of the programme was curated from a national call out that resulted in 99 proposals

**Brian Lobel** Carpe Minuta Prima

Leeds Market. 60 Passersby sell a minute of their time to Brian. He records their minute makes a written contract then burns the minutes on individual CD's to be sold back the next day.

**Grace Surman & Catherine Butterworth** Two Four One One  
Queen Square House 14. Two performances of a newly made piece. Taking the census of April 2 1911 as a starting point, the artists re-created (after a fashion) the diversions, disappearances and relocations which took place that night.

**Oliver Bray with Mark Flisher** The Speech Maker  
The Courtroom, Leeds Town Hall. A 12 hour oration comprising many of the "famous speeches " of history and text sent in from participating audiences live and remote.

**Jenny Lawson** Bake me a Cake  
The Light shopping centre. All week-end Jenny collected cake stories from hundreds of visitors to her "kitchen". She created many dozens of cakes responding to the stories including Divorce Cake, Sunshine Cake and Barbie Cake. In the final sharing we ate them.

**Alex Kelly of Third Angel** Inspiration Exchange  
Leeds Museum. Six hours of swapping one inspirational story for another in a relaxed and intimate setting.

**Janek Schaefer** Local Radio Orchestra  
Leeds Museum Arena. 12 classic portable radios tuned and retuned by audiences to the separate parts of Janek's composition created a unique and ever changing composition over six hours.

**Simon Persighetti and Katie Etheridge** Take Me to the Bridge  
Leeds Bridge. Detailed photos taken from Leeds Bridge were made into transfers and smoothed onto the artists' and participants' skin. Then the hand or foot with the image is re-shot from exactly the same spot. A wonderful archive was created.

**Compass Late**  
Leeds Gallery, Munro House. An informal platform of new short pieces by 6 regional artists/companies. A late bar and no fixed seating helped create a relaxed and attentive audience. Artists were Indivisible, Northern Creative Theatre, PLaY, Sara Zaltash, Ultimate Dancer and Ollie Smith & Phoebe Walsh.

More detail about all the work and the artists can be found on our website:  
[www.compassliveart.org.uk](http://www.compassliveart.org.uk)

## *Venues*

The Festival was driven by the artists' work. We were brilliantly supported by Opera North and The Grand Theatre who gave us The Howard Assembly Room for front of house costs only and all box office takings. And West Yorkshire Playhouse who were considering Reckless Sleepers took the plunge with this new-to-them company when they knew it would feature in the Festival. They gave Compass priority booking for one performance. Once the other works were selected from the call-out we then identified and negotiated locations. We were pleasantly surprised at how approachable and supportive people were. Leeds City Council was fantastic and through various departments we secured The

Courtroom at the Town Hall, the City Museum Arena and a back-to-back front room in the Museum, a stall in Leeds Market and clearance to use Leeds Bridge. Leeds Met University provided Queen Square House 14, Leeds Gallery at Munro House took down their exhibition overnight to accommodate Compass Late and The Light shopping centre gave us free access all week-end to an unused shop unit. Most of these were either free or cost a nominal amount. Staff in each place were also extremely engaged and helpful. Leeds was definitely up for it. We'd never felt so proud of the city.

## *Audience Experience*

We had a wonderful response for volunteers mostly students from both universities. We briefed them thoroughly and they chose which artist they wanted to support. They remained with that artist for the duration of the festival. They did all front of house work and in Jenny Lawson's case became fully fledged baking assistants. This created engagement and loyalty and made the volunteers really well informed and helpful with attenders.

Total attendance at all 10 events was **2403**.

- Audience responses – questionnaires were handed out on the weekend of the festival, and from those collated we found that the festival was highly successful in attracting new audiences, with 67% of respondents saying they were new to live art. 36% of recipients said they had come across the work while they were passing by, or visiting the venue where the work took place. There was a good mix of local and non-local audiences, with 55% living in Leeds, and 45% visiting from outside the city. 33% heard about the festival through the University, showing that promotion to students was particularly effective.
- Vox Pop Blog - By Louise Hill  
Gathering opinions about Compass Festival - <http://compassliveart-voxpops.blogspot.com/>
- Documentation for the Compass Festival of Live Art can be seen on our image archive on Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/compassliveart>.
- Selected audience feedback (from questionnaires):
  - *"Quite novel – not seen event exactly like this before – very good!"*
  - *"Bemused and interesting. Food for thought"*
  - *"Crazy"*
  - *"Stimulating"*
  - *"Walked in and found it. I enjoyed interacting with it"*
  - *"Would be amazing to see it on an even bigger scale"*
  - *"Very engaging, funny and warm"*
  - *"effective at bringing alternative art work to the general public"*
  - *"I loved being part of 'Bake Me a Cake'. It brought back memories and made me happy"*

- *"It's strangely mesmerising watching the process. I think it's a lovely idea seeing the memories behind the cakes"*
- *"The whole atmosphere was warm and welcoming"*
- *"A gentle pause in the day"*
- *"Excellent location. Good interactivity. It's free! Interesting concept"*
- *"Very peaceful and engaging but on a community level. Nice to see different themes of Leeds fall and meet together"*

In addition there was appreciation of the management and organisation of the festival – ease of access, caretaking and availability of information:

*It's so good to come to a festival that works; everything happening as planned, and welcoming.*

*This is really good for Leeds; really feels like something is happening here.*

*The Guide Map is so good – well planned, easy to use, ace, easy to use. The intro is lovely.*

*Please can we have this every year*

*Your volunteers are amazing, really helpful and looked after us great.*

Over the course of the Saturday, Twitter took hold and created a forum for people to enter into the events and exchange info and gossip. Tweets included a route through all the festival events that allowed you to walk downhill all the way. Word got out that the best man at one of the weddings taking place at the Town Hall that day had emailed his speech to Oliver Bray who read it out from the Courtroom...

### *Things we would have done differently*

Although the Festival was amazingly cost effective, we would not try to do so much on so little money again. Would pay the artists more and have more paid staff for longer

We would have liked better signage at the venues. It was plentiful and effective, but we would have liked to have spent some money on it.

Would have had a press liaison. Jo Nancarrow our communications manager had her hands full with all the communications for all of Compass and she was great. Peter Reed did sterling work in the blogosphere on top of everything else. A dedicated press officer would have made life easier.

This would have been a great project for trainee producers to receive hands on experience. A trainee scheme would be excellent in future.

### *What we could not have done without*

*Compass Consortium for context and support: Karen Watson and East Street Arts, Sarah Spanton, Jo Nancarrow*

*Peter Reed priceless producer, Compass Late curator and general wonder man*

*Jon Wakeman map guide design*

*Jonathan Turner photography*

*Steve Curtis tireless technical manager, health and safety man*

*Leeds City Council, Leeds Museum, Leeds Market, Town Hall Courtroom, Opera North, Grand Theatre, Leeds Met, Leeds Gallery, The Light, West Yorkshire Playhouse.*

*Our wonderful volunteers.*

The people of Leeds

## *Feedback from collaborators and artists*

I recently graduated from Central School of Speech and Drama, London with a BA in Producing & Arts Management. In the final few months of my studies I had to make some choices about where I wanted to base myself, what kind of field I wanted to work in and the kind of producing practice I wished to establish.

I have now set up as a freelance producer based out of Slung Low's HUB in Holbeck where I work as an Associate Producer for a growing portfolio of solo artists, companies, venues and festivals. Following meeting the Compass Consortium at a sector meeting they held in Sheffield back in May 2011, I was gripped by the curatorial aims of the Compass Festival project, interested in the prospect of working with an experienced figure such as Annie Lloyd and impressed by the scale of event the consortium were proposing to achieve with such meagre funds.

I expressed my interest in the project to Annie at that meeting and she later invited me to work as an Associate Producer for the festival - responsible for programming and producing our Compass Late: Regional Artists Platform at the newly opened Leeds Gallery, Munro House. Additionally, I worked across the entire programme in every aspect of delivering the programme. This included identifying possible venues, negotiating use of space, resources and encouraging the huge amounts of goodwill from partners and associates that resulted in the festival successfully 'punching above its weight' as a landmark event in Leeds.

Annie kindly spared a small wage from her already over-stretched budget and I made up the rest through securing a Professional Development grant from ACE. They agreed with my belief that Compass would provide invaluable to my professional development and indeed it has. I have put into practice many skills learnt during placements and study in London and Prague and have felt supported, respected and appreciated as part of the Compass Team. I believe the Consortium to be a balanced collaboration mixing the perfect levels of experience, contacts, resource, skills and imagination to continue to work successfully in the future as a regional development agency/ advocate and also as coordinators of nationally significant public events.

For me, as a young producer returning to Yorkshire, the team have imparted helpful advice, friendly support and useful contacts. I leave the project tired, but incredibly pleased of what we

have achieved. I think the programme was really well balanced, feeling at once intimate and immediate whilst also feeling significant and of a strong regional importance.

From traders in the markets, passersby on Leeds Bridge to shoppers and teenagers in The Light - for me, we re defined and re claimed the words Live Art from being academic and off limits to being open source, adventurous, immediate, meaningful art experiences 'in situ', interrupting people's lives and spaces across the city. Complimenting this with the programming of keystone shows from Forced Entertainment and Reckless Sleepers, which demonstrate the best things, atmospheres, relationships, aesthetics and challenges for the theatre space re animated buildings like West Yorkshire Playhouse and Howard Assembly Room for the better.

Professionals and public were talking about and noticing Compass as being 'different' - it catered and impressed grassroots art makers, students, unsuspecting public audiences and experienced artists and professionals alike. I can't wait for the future of Compass - both as a producer and a consumer of great art that anyone can enjoy.

Peter Reed  
**Producer & Curator**  
**The Performing Office Ltd.**

We really enjoyed having Reckless Sleepers with us, the shows went down extremely well and we have had great feedback. It was also really lovely that the Playhouse were part of the festival, and I really hope it's a relationship we can continue.

I was able to see some of the pieces over the weekend, I particularly enjoyed Alex's piece in the Museum and thought it was a great space for it. Generally I thought the festival seemed to go down really well and seemed really well attended, I kept bumping into people who were heading off to various things which was lovely. Also got to see some of Forced Entertainment on Saturday, which I enjoyed.

Congrats all your hard work, did everything else run smoothly on your end?

**Amy Letman**  
**Associate Producer**  
[www.wypfurnace.co.uk](http://www.wypfurnace.co.uk)

I heard great things about the gig. Wish I could've been there.  
Take care and much love.

Tx

**Tim Etchells**  
**Forced Entertainment**

Hi Annie,

It was great to perform the show in Leeds and thanks for inviting us to do it!

I really hope the Festival as a whole went well for you.

Best wishes

**Eileen Evans**

**General Manager  
Forced Entertainment**

Dear Annie,

We are back on our local bridges and thinking about the whirlwind weekend of work and play and play and work that made up our Leeds experience. Thanks very much to you and all the COMPASS team and people at East Street Arts. The way in which we were welcomed including the set up of technical support and work-base was really excellent. This was the style throughout from proposal through to completion of the project. Could you please send our thanks to Joe, Olivia, Jim and Abby for their care, assistance and good cheer in stormy weather. We have not put all the images up on the tumblr site yet but hope to do this very soon.

Cheers and Best Wishes,  
**Simon Persighetti & Katie Etheridge**

Hi Annie

Just to say I sold a minute of my time and had a part of Leeds bridge stuck on my hand, retuned some radios, and swapped a story with Alex and listened to "this lady's not for turning" speech in the Town Hall. All for free! I really enjoyed having an alternative experience while weaving in and out of the consumer mayhem. Thanks for the experience.

**Ant x (Anthony Haddon Theatre Company Blah Blah Blah)**

Hi Annie

Thank you so much for a really fantastic weekend. I do hope that you all were happy with how Carpe Minuta Prima went at the market. It was really a great privilege to show the work in Leeds and as part of such a strong event. I do hope we'll get a chance to work together in the future, and please do keep me informed about future projects.

I hope you're allowing yourself some well-deserved rest.

Warmly,  
**Brian Lobel**

Hi Annie,

Thanks for your email. It was such a great night, we had a really good time and it was lovely to see so many people in the space! It is important for us to do events like Compass Late because we try to make our space a blank canvas that people feel they can do almost anything with. It was such a transformation from the Illustrators exhibition to Compass Late and particularly a successful one- the space works really well as a performance space.

As far as we are concerned, we are very happy with how things went (the slight pulling up of the floor paint is unfortunate but something which will probably occur regularly with events) and we feel it has had a positive impact on both the Gallery and the Cafe.

It would be interesting to work with you in the future on events such as Compass Late, so keep in touch please!

Best Wishes

**Ellie and Matt  
Leeds Gallery**

It was a truly wonderful experience and it was everything I hoped it would be. I can't thank you enough for supporting the piece - I have never experienced this level of support before, so for me it was simply amazing. I think this kind of work is more complicated logistically in terms of stuff/

materials and scale, and you really made it work, right from sourcing the fridge, to the sponsored ingredients, to helping me 'move in'. And of course, not to mention the perfect venue. This extra help really shifted the experience for me, it allowed me to concentrate more on the work, without me ending up hating it before I had even started! Also, I was fascinated by how integral my five wonderful helpers became to the piece itself, I couldn't have achieved the volume of cakes without their support, and it was great to have a 'creative' and enthusiastic team of people to work with. I am still overwhelmed by the beautiful stories and memories in the book - I would love you to read it at some point. And I am very much looking forward to seeing the images - I have some great pics too, which you are welcome to have/see. I have really missed being in that wonderful space this week, I keep having flashes of memories!

**Jenny xx (Lawson)**

It was quite an incredible victory for our sector - and to do so well with the audience figures too. WYP marketing guy Nick was pretty shit hot. It made a real difference to be part of a Festival line up of course.

you break my heart too.

xm

**Mole Wetherell**  
**Artistic Director**  
**Reckless Sleepers**