
Unruly Utterances

**Participation, Criticality
and Compass Festival 2014**

Andy Abbott
Emma Cocker
Patrick Coyle
Victoria Gray
Gillie Kleiman
Annie Lloyd
Gill Park
Harold Offeh
Nathan Walker
Adam Young

Edited by Yvonne Carmichael & Amelia Crouch

Have you ever been to anything like this before?

Yes = 71%, No = 29%

Was it better than shopping?

Yes = 99%, No = 1%

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Introduction

Yvonne Carmichael and Amelia Crouch

The impetus for this publication was Compass Festival.¹ Compass Festival is a biennial festival that presents live art in locations around Leeds including shopping centres, markets and city streets as well as in more traditional gallery or theatre spaces. It is part of an increasing number of live art activities happening in Yorkshire, the growth of which is exciting but fragile. The nature of this work – often temporary, one off or site specific – limits its potential audience and there is the risk that live art could communicate only to the converted, to a small range of practitioners or a devoted audience already in the know. Compass Festival aims to address this in its approach to programming in public spaces. This publication aims to reach a further audience, beyond the time and space confines of the festival. The articles have been commissioned to critically reflect on the festival and its remit and to encourage wider critical debate around live art practice in the region.

Articles are organised into 3 themes: *Participation & Audience*, *Criticality & Writing* and *Contexts*.

1. Participation & Audience

One aim of Compass Festival is to make live art available to non-art, non-live art audiences without compromise in respect of the quality and complexity of the work presented. Data collected indicates that work did reach a new audience – 29% of visitors sampled had not been to anything like it before. This kind of statistic is at once encouraging (nearly one third newbies) and of debatable worth (the sample size is small and the question open to interpretation). Measuring audience experiences is difficult but it is the kind of information that funders want in order to justify monies received.

Another statistic (slightly flippant we admit): 99% of respondents said their experience of Compass Festival was better than shopping. This raises a question. Is the work presented in Compass meant to be entertainment, something else you can do instead of shopping? Or is it antagonistic to the domination of public space by consumerism? In some contexts live art acts as a counter to market-driven art practices but in Yorkshire there's no significant art market anyway. Might participation numbers just be a new economics, with the value of a work measured not by its sale price but by the number of people who take part?

Articles by Harold Offeh, Gill Park and Amelia Crouch consider the increasing trend, over the last 20 years, towards 'relational' work by artists interested in the materiality of social exchange. Offeh lays out the theoretical terrain provided by the work of Nicolas Bourriaud and notes the co-incidence with cultural policy inaugurated under new Labour that increasingly instrumentalised the arts and championed participation. Park and Crouch write about their experiences of work from within the festival, suggesting that close attention needs to be given to artworks themselves. What experiences do they provide for audiences, what critical frameworks do they set up? It's hard to quibble with the idea that giving people access to art is a good thing, but we need to consider the ethics of participation. As Offeh asks, who benefits, who is in control?

¹ Compass Festival forms one part of the broader Compass programme that happens throughout the year across Yorkshire. See: www.compassliveart.org.uk

2. Criticality & Writing

Irit Rogoff distinguishes ‘criticality’ from criticism and critique. Criticism is as an historic mode ‘preoccupied with the application of values and judgements.’² Critique unveils the naturalised beliefs inherent in such judgments but still retains a pretence of looking ‘in from the outside.’³ Only criticality involves awareness, from the critic, of the limitations of their own thought. To put it more simply, the critic does not pretend that they are an authority, an expert who stands outside the artwork and passes comment. Imagine instead a conversation between artist and critic, between artwork and written text. This is what we hoped for in this publication.

We started with a brief for each writer; we asked them to use a performance or event from the festival as a departure point to write more expansively on a given theme. These themes included: the politics of participation, networks and contexts for live art, site specificity, accessibility and integrity, writing and live art. As you can see things didn’t work quite so smoothly. Some writers directly reference the festival and some do not. There are probably several reasons for this. Perhaps the brief was vague or the task too difficult with limited time and funds. It did, however, seem that there was a degree of anxiety or reluctance from contributors to write about specific works from the festival.

A small sector (by which we mean a group of practitioners who identify with a particular moniker or way of working) can be supportive and nurturing to artists but it can also risk stifling debate for fear of causing offence. Yet criticality is important to the resilience of artists and programmers. It helps work to get better. So, we decided to include a contribution from Gillie Kleiman: *Principles for how to do community through criticism* developed with participants in a Live Art Development Agency supported DIY weekend that she led as part of the broader Compass programme. These principals – akin to Rogoff’s ‘criticality’ – advocate for criticism to be a supportive act where ‘artist’ and ‘critic’ are not fixed identities but both acknowledged as vulnerable, embedded positions.

² Irit Rogoff, ‘From Criticism to Critique to Criticality’ available online at : www.ejpcp.net/transversal/0806/rogoff1/en

³ Ibid

Critical debate need not be written, it can happen in many contexts. But writing is our format here and it presents particular problems. For example it has a permanence or perceived weightiness not shared by conversation, one must choose what voice or tone to write in and try to structure proliferating thoughts without losing their nuance. The other contributors to this section offer their insights into the role of writing in relation to art practice. Andy Abbott considers an oft perceived split between practice and theory in an impassioned plea for a symbiotic relationship between the two. Emma Cocker and Patrick Coyle suggest some of the difficulties involved in writing about an artwork that either may not yet exist or that no longer exists. Cocker asks how the live-ness of an endlessly disappearing performance can be translated to the written page, delineating the relationship between language, writing and performance. Coyle offers a witty take on the language of press releases and art interpretation. He reminds us that language is not inherently critical or insightful and can be a barrier to accessing work.

3. Contexts

The final section of the publication is slightly different from the preceding two. Having meditated a bit on the nature of participation and the role of writing and criticality, we wanted to address more directly the question of what Compass Festival is, and why. We asked Annie Lloyd, co-founder and current co-director of Compass, to tell us about the rationale for Compass and the contexts and challenges it responds to. This is counterposed with articles by two other organisations that show live art in Yorkshire – Oui Performance (York) and LAB (Leeds). Though this is in no way a full overview of live art happening in Yorkshire, we hope that it will highlight some of the opportunities currently available to see and do live art in the region. More reflectively it demonstrates the differing and sometimes overlapping rationale that influences the structure and programming of these organisations. If, as we hope, this publication can act as a spur to encourage a critical live art audience, then this seemed like a good place to end. Read the profiles; go and see some live art and make your own mind up about it.

1. Participation & Audience

'What is live art? Well, at its most fundamental, Live Art is when an artist chooses to make work directly in front of the audience in space and time. So instead of making an object, or an environment (a painting for example) and leaving it for the audience to encounter in their own time, Live Art comes into being at the actual moment of encounter between artist and spectator. Or at least even if they are not physically present, the artist sets up a situation in which the audience experience the work in a particular space and time, and the notion of 'presence' is key to the concerns of the work.'

Joshua Sofaer 'What is live art,' performance script, 2002

'In the UK, New Labour (1997 - 2010) deployed a rhetoric almost identical to that of the practitioners of socially engaged art in order to justify public spending on the arts. Anxious for accountability, the question it asked on entering office in 1997 was: what can arts do for society? The answers included increasing employability, minimising crime, fostering aspiration – anything but artistic experimentation and research as values in and of themselves.

The production and reception of the arts was therefore reshaped within a political logic in which audience figures and marketing statistics became essential to securing public funding.'

Claire Bishop, 'Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship', 2012

'We all believe in the principle of participation [...]. What we rarely question is what constitutes the listening, hearing, or seeing in and of itself – the good intentions of recognition become a substitute for the kind of detailed analysis which might serve to expand the notions of what constitutes a mode of speaking in public, of being heard by a public, of having a public manifestation.'

Irit Rogoff 'Looking Away: Participations in Visual Culture',

in After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance, G. Butt ed., 2005

Sketches on the Politics of Participation

Harold Offeh

The word participation has come to define much art activity over the past 20 years. But what is participation? And what do we mean by it? I have to confess that my intention is not to provide a definitive and academically rigorous appraisal. This piece is part commentary, part polemic. Participation has become a specific medium within contemporary art, reflecting on the numerous pre and post relational aesthetic strategies adopted by artists. But it's also a term used to describe the qualitative experience of people once described as in turn: viewers, visitors and the audience.

My own interest in participation comes from my practice as an artist working across different media but heavily invested in performance. Initially participation for me was about the role of the audience. How is the audience positioned? What is their role in relation to the artwork? To say, 'Participant', suggests someone who is actively engaged, a willing accomplice in an activity.

In the 90s superstar French curator Nicolas Bourriaud anointed a number of artists' practices with the term Relational Aesthetics. These were artists like Rirkrit Tiravanija, Carsten Höller and Liam Gillick; people he had supported and exhibited as part of his role as chief curator at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. His book *Relational Aesthetics* (1998) is a collection of essays and articles that attempt to sum up certain practices he defines as addressing 'human relations and their social context'.¹ When the book was published I was an art student in Brighton, I couldn't really get my head around the language. At the risk of oversimplification, here was work informed and consisting of relations, relationships, discourses and the intercourse between people. Or as Rirkrit Tiravanija puts it: 'It is not what you see that is important but what takes place between people.'²

Relational art was made by artists interested in the materiality of social exchange and in creating and facilitating this activity as authored art. The audience or participant experience is vital. For example in Tiravanija's *Pad Thai* (1990): a scenario that

encompassed cooking and serving food in the gallery. Here, you get the construction of social recreational space in the gallery. The participants constitute the work through their participation of eating, talking, having a good time or not, but ultimately it's their presence that is essential.

Many of these approaches were part of a much broader shift in contemporary art that began to question and redefine the gallery space. Artists began to reconsider what the gallery was for and to challenge institutions and their approach. There was a sense in which the gallery could function in many ways: as an alternative art school, restaurant or nightclub. These models, seemingly new but often reconfigurations of Dada, Situationist or Fluxus strategies potentially repositioned the traditional perspective of the passive gallery visitor into an active and dynamic participant shaping and co-authoring the work with their presence.

However, let's deal with this idea of a passive gallery viewer walking around spending a few seconds at a time looking at the work before moving on. There is an inherent assumption that this viewer is not actively engaging with the work. Somehow viewing isn't participatory, or certainly not enough. It's this question of how you measure the level and quality of participation that has concerned many critics and writers like Claire Bishop and Grant Kester. It's interesting to note that much of this practice in the late 90s and 2000s coincides with the cultural policy of the New Labour government from 1997 onwards. This government instrumentalised art and culture as an

economic regenerator with the building boom of arts hubs that mushroomed around the UK; galleries in Walsall, Newcastle and Middlesbrough etc. This capital investment however had to be justified by increased participation. This not only meant more bodies through the doors but institutions being encouraged to develop education and learning programmes that would engage specific groups and communities with contemporary arts practice.

Personally, I don't have a problem with publicly funded institutions being held accountable and challenged to engage with a diversity of audiences. But the problem with this agenda was that it validated certain kinds of gallery experiences and our old friend participation was every arts minister, gallery director, curator and gallery educator's best friend. What is strange to me is that participation in this period – and still today – as a strategy and working method is operating across the art institutions' hierarchies but often without a meaningful dialogue.

So, if you ask an exhibition curator about participatory practices they will frame the discussion in one way. Perhaps around artist led initiatives that use various models to construct situations. This could be radically different to how a learning/education curator would frame participation with regard to notions of access, process over outcome and the primacy of the audience's experience. This may prove to be an old perspective, these are certainly generalisations and I can think of a few examples of galleries where there is an interesting and dynamic institutional relationship and perspective on participatory practices.

While the giddy excitement and novelty of relational and participatory work may have faded. There are a series of important questions that need to apply to these approaches. What are the ethical processes and positions adopted in the production of these works? If as Tiravanija says it's all about 'what takes place between people.' How is that constructed? And for who's benefit? Who is in control?

There are serious ethical issues to be addressed around access, power, money, labour and authorship. Looking back over projects I've instigated and been involved with there has been a failure on my part as the artist to fully confront the tricky ethics. But, note to self, if you're going to work with people, surely you have to recognise the politics of human interactions, whether that is framed as art or not.

Artist, curator and educator Sophie Hope in her blog post, *Access to the Mountain: Navigating the complexities of participation 2013*, brilliantly sums up the present situation

"As the participation industry starts to crumble, at least financially, we are having to reevaluate these distinctions between paid professionals and unpaid participants. This may force us to rethink what it is we want to fight for in our free time." ³

¹ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* trans. S. Pleasance and F. Woods (Paris: Les Presses du Réel, 2002) p8.

² Rirkrit Tiravanija's phrase is frequently cited to explain his work, for example, see the Walker Art Center press release: www.ress.walkerart.org/release.wac?id=2743&style=print accessed August 2007.

³ Sophie Hope, *Access to the Mountain: Navigating the complexities of participation*, ICA bog, 2013. www.ica.org.uk/blog/sophie-hope-participation

The Lady or the Tiger: participation and live art

Gill Park

**I know not all that may be coming, but be it what it will,
I'll go to it laughing.**

-Herman Melville, Moby Dick

‘On 14 November 1851 Moby Dick was released to American audiences. Can someone verify that on their smart phone please?’ So begins a new performance created for the Compass Festival by Oliver Bray, presented 163 years to the day since Captain Ahab’s ‘capitalist’ pursuit of Moby Dick and the same day, we’re later reminded, of Sainsbury’s cynical retelling of the Christmas day truce for profit.¹

A witty, smart, incisive and absurd half hour follows in which one man riffs off the ticks and twitches of his audience, skirting lightly across issues of democracy, technology, consumption, compassion, truth, life, love and death via Herman Melville, Frank R. Stockton and J. Sainsbury. Running throughout is a commitment to the unpredictable and its presence within the highly prescribed spaces of art and theatre.

The blurring of hierarchical distinctions between performer and audience is one of the aspects key to live art and artists have long been exploring new and experimental ways to emancipate their audience from the position of passive consumer to active producer. In the last 10-15 years relational work, which takes as its point of departure the whole of human relations and their social contexts,² has become almost ubiquitous, as chronicled by Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics*, and the debates this instigated. ‘Interactive’, ‘participatory’, ‘collaborative’, ‘accessible’ and ‘user-friendly’ have been common terms in the lexicon of contemporary art since ‘Messianistic utopias’ and ‘formal novelties’³ were replaced by practices of artistic d-i-y and the extension of art ‘into the invention of the everyday and the development of time lived.’⁴

¹ On 14 November 2014, Sainsburys released an advert that reconstructs Christmas Day 1914, when German and British soldiers emerged from the trenches to play football and share gifts. The advert was designed to sell a chocolate bar, which, in the advert, a British soldier slips into a German soldier’s pocket.

² Ibid p. 14

³ Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics* (Les Presses du reel: Dijon, 2002), p. 14

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Bishop, Claire, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." *October* (Fall 2004, No. 110) p.67

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics* (Les Presses du reel: Dijon, 2002), p.9

The shift toward increasing audience participation, however, is not without problems. Claire Bishop in her critique of Bourriaud, *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, published in *October* magazine in 2004, makes us all too aware of the failings of relational or participatory art in its potential to instrumentalise audiences, to act at the service of the institution, to commodify social relations and its flattening ideas of what community is, or as Bishop puts it, the creation of an ‘immanent togetherness.’⁵ The task for live art, then, is to negotiate these debates, finding ways to enable audience agency while resisting the instrumentalisation of participants for neoliberal agendas.

Underpinning Bray’s performance is Frank R. Stockton’s allegorical tale *The Lady, or the Tiger* in which a princess’ lover is put on trial by a barbaric king. It is a trial by chance and requires simply that the man opens one of two doors. One door opens to a beautiful bride (though not his lover, the princess) and the man is saved. Behind the other is a vicious tiger which would doubtless ravage the man to death. The princess makes it her business to identify which lies behind each door and, during the trial she gestures to the man in question. He follows without hesitation. The unknowable question – for the story ends here – is; does the tiger or the lady come out of the door? The story’s conclusion is impossible to predict, dependent as it is on the inner desire and agency of an individual. Will the princess’ love for the man drive her to keep him apart from the beautiful bride or save him from the ravaging tiger?

At 6.30pm in the stage@leeds building on 14 November 2014, a man in a blue T-shirt becomes ‘King Ahab,’ a random coupling is orchestrated (‘you two sit there and hold hands’), mobile phones ring, wine is exchanged, the entire audience sings *Silent Night* and chocolate is passed between the rows before a designated prince is told to pick his door and the lights come down. There are lots of laughs as we move seamlessly between intention and improvisation, theatre and the mundane, being spectator and creator and between the collective togetherness of the audience and the chance decisions of individuals in a room. Somehow, through the melding of a pre-scripted story and the vicissitudes of this particular audience, a narrative unfolds and I am reminded of the potential of art to escape the binary of audience and artist without collapsing it altogether. Where Bishop warns that audience-dependent works can be flattening, or easy to anticipate or ‘entirely beholden to the contingencies of its environment or audience’⁶, Bray’s performance had a life and creativity that kept us guessing till the end. It played with the power structures between artist and audience, creating a structure while subjecting it to the subjectivities of those present. As Bourriaud tells us, ‘The relationship between people’ (which we might read as ‘the relationship between artist and audience’) ‘has to take on extreme and clandestine forms, if it is to dodge the empire of predictability.’⁷

Critical Reflection?

– Identity and participatory art

Amelia Crouch

When I entered the room housing Brian Lobel's interactive artwork *You have to forgive me, you have to forgive me, you have to forgive me* I was handed a long questionnaire. To take part in his one-on-one performance piece I had to fill it in and, to be honest, I couldn't be bothered. This process and the investment it required screened me out and I don't think that this was any bad thing. In contrast my accompanying friend squealed with glee at the questions which – it transpired – were the framing questions asked by the character Carrie Bradshaw at the start of episodes of the TV programme *Sex and the City* which ran from 1998-2004. My friend had been an ardent viewer and sat down diligently to complete the questionnaire.

This got me thinking about the potential of artworks that aim at a purposefully niche audience. Lobel's approach to soliciting participants differed significantly from the project I'd seen just prior: *Between us, we know everything* by Quarantine. This artwork involved the artists travelling to several Leeds neighbourhoods in a van kitted out as a mobile studio. Members of the public were invited to record a vox pop sharing colloquial knowledge. Contributions – ranging from bee keeping tips to stain removal – were uploaded to a website, forming a growing compendium of voices, faces and information that anyone can watch. It was a catchall project designed to involve as many people as possible. Where Lobel's work involved an interactive relationship between artist and participant, Quarantine's project minimised the apparent agency of the artists (who had a directorial role) and foregrounded instead the identity of participants. Participants appeared as a collective mass, presumably aiming to present a celebratory representation of a community of shared knowledge.

I don't want to suggest that one type of project (niche audience vs. mass participation) is inherently better than another. However I think that the contrast between these two works points to a deeper distinction that is not about participant numbers so much as about the politics of representation. Other writers have already described the increasingly

participatory nature of live art and I wonder whether this focus on participation can lead us to forget some of the lessons of live art past. In a discipline that largely involves the live presence of the performer, artists have frequently probed the nature of identity. When the focus moves from artist to participant shouldn't we then also shift our critical attention to the complexities of audience or participant identity? Is there a risk that participatory works may just uncritically represent the participants back to themselves?

When I asked my friend what had happened in Lobel's performance she described something 'a bit like a therapy session' where she'd felt quite at ease talking about her past relationships with Lobel; a stranger who she'd never meet again. He 'diagnosed' her and prescribed an episode of *Sex and the City* that they watched together. I was most interested to hear how this experience had prompted her to think critically about a programme that her younger self had simply enjoyed ("don't they have jobs," "they're so self-obsessed" and "it's all about consumerism" were some of her comments). Her identification with the characters had shifted with age and her conversation with the artist also made her consider how a gay man may identify with Carrie and her pals. The work highlighted the influence programmes such as *Sex and the City* have on our construction of self-identity and implicitly presented a complex view of identity as something mutable and in-progress.

There were other festival projects that questioned the normative construction of identity. Jade Pollard-Crowe's *Because My Vogue is*

Your Vogue subverted the familiar format of a shopping centre make up counter, offering women the chance to be made up with facial hair. Selina Thompson's *Pat it, prick it and mark it with 'B'* involved volunteers and audience members constructing a dress out of cake whilst Thompson was wearing it. Purportedly inspired by a comment from the artist's mother about food being a prison, the work nonetheless transcends a simple biographical reading. Audience members might alternately identify with the piece via their own relationship with food, their complicity in sustaining the body image of others, or both. So it's certainly the case that works with an element of participation can prompt critical reflection, not just joining in. Yet these latter projects involve audience participation in a way that is strongly shaped by material and conceptual content provided by the artist.

There should, I think, be scope for live art works that are strongly structured around content from participants, but this is hard to do with a drop-in format where relationships are fleeting. Maybe the answer in this case is time and the building of sustained relationships. Or maybe there is no one right answer.

2. Criticality and Writing

'Performance honours the idea that a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame can have an experience of value which leaves no visible trace afterward. Writing about it necessarily cancels "tracelessness" inaugurated within this performative promise.'

Peggy Phelan, 'Unmarked: The Politics of Performance', 1993

'Being 'post-critical' isn't possible. We're all judging all the time. Any critic who tells you they're not judging is lying or delusional. Being critical of art is a way of showing it respect. [...] Nowadays too many see criticism mainly as PR and reviews as sales tools. This allows the market rather than artists to set the discourse. Adding to the problem, most critics enthuse over everything they see. This is sad and sells everyone short, especially when people report not liking almost 90% of the shows they see.'

Jerry Saltz, 'Writing Wrongs', Frieze, October 2005

'To get down and dirty with art, to feel its grain and let it feel yours, is subjective, sure, but it is also the most meaningful critical activity I can imagine.'

J.F. Charlesworth quotes Tom Morton in 'Criticism vs. Critique,' Art Monthly, May 2011

Matter over Mind: Theory and Just Doing in (Live) Art

Andy Abbott

I've never called myself a live artist, and I can't see a situation arising in the future when I would. I do, however, feel a fair amount of affinity with practitioners who go by that label, or find it a useful tag to describe what they do. For me 'live art' signifies a practice that exists between disciplines with a focus on the experiential over the representative; the heart over the head, practice over theory.

I never even wanted to be called an Artist, at least not one with a capital 'A'. As a younger man I believed that Artists were self-important po-faced bourgeois egomaniacs who made boring things to be smugly contemplated by middle-class wankers in lifeless, uptight galleries and sold to people with more money than sense. For the most part I still believe this. I only studied art as a way to get out of working in warehouses and call centres and even then I spent most of my time doing just that.

In my spare moments I played in bands in the underground punk scene. It was in this music scene with its Do-It-Yourself ethos and ideals of full-participation that I got my aesthetic kicks. To me, the things that the Artworld disingenuously claimed to do – to move people, to change ways of thinking about the world – were actually being achieved by people who had no aspiration to be professional Artists, or professional anything, and had little or no interest in the gallery-based institutional world of Art. It happened in the function rooms or cellars of pubs rented out for the evening by a bunch of friends to play music to one another, or in a squatted nursery, or on the streets as part of a carnival or protest.

So, the concept of live art – when thought of as an unruly, impassioned antidote to a stuffy and overly intellectualised Art industry – makes sense to me.

At college and University I tried to bring some of the 'reality' I was experiencing in the music scene into the art studio. I was in an environment where it was expected that, as an artist, you would make work that illustrated some difficult philosophical concept written

about by a now-dead French man. Theoretical rigour was more worthy of praise than craftsmanship, a clever idea of more value than hard work.

In response I made art that was about time, labour and everyday creativity (including a 3 month performance where I made 8000 card bricks in production line style to create a replica of the Electric Press chimney in 2005) with the aim of showing art was something anyone could do, and that you didn't have to have read the entire works of Deleuze and Guattari to enjoy it. I also invited the audience to become an active agent in the work through their interaction or contribution to its outcome – starting with a playable table football table made from scrap, then anecdote vending machines, audience-completed installations and eventually projects developed with the audience who would experience them.

In spite of this, over time some of the theory-bollocks we were fed in our lectures and seminars started to resonate with me. I was introduced to the writings of the Situationist International that reframed Marxism in terms I could appreciate through my experience in the DIY music scene. Guy Debord and Raoul Vaneigem weren't just speaking my language, they were articulating things I had felt but couldn't put into words. I was hooked and wanted to do more digging in to the foundations of these writings, and to follow these ideas through into the present day. Before you could say 'non-alienated collective subjectivity of the internationalist multitude' I was knee-deep in books about relational art theory, alternative economics, postanarchism and autonomist

Marxism. This led me to continue my art practice within an academic context. Whilst it had its constraints I felt working in an educational landscape allowed more freedom to explore ideas and practice than the market-led Artworld.

So, despite my initial misgivings I was a willing convert to a more intellectualised approach to art. I sometimes imagined what my younger self would make of the continental philosophy-spewing monster I'd become: how disgusted he'd be at my participation in that wordy and elitist club.

For this reason I find the live art community refreshing. There's less prevalence of difficult language borrowed from elsewhere, less demand that every work references a particular 'on trend' philosophical topic: less talk and more doing, greater trust that the work will speak for itself. This was exemplified by my experience of Compass Festival 2014. Looking through the programme the majority of the bump to describe the works were short, playful texts that read more like a voiceover for a film trailer than an overwritten artist's statement. It was demonstrated by some of the work too. Sylvia Rimat's *Imagine Us* was a joyous public intervention, absent of the self-awareness that typifies similar projects that emerge from the contemporary art world, and all the more generous towards the audience for it.

It is equally important, however, to recognise the benefits that critical thought can bring to an artistic practice: 'live' or otherwise. As illustrated by my experience at University there is the potential

for harmony between practice and theory; when in sync they are able to mutually support and spur one another on. Without such dialogue we miss opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning and risk stalling the development of our own practice; creating work that is naïve, outmoded and potentially conservative.

To find what resonates or works with your practice may require wading through a lot of shit but ultimately this can be a rewarding journey that cultivates a more outward looking, informed and diverse perspective. So, rather than whether to embrace or dismiss theory, the real question that faces us as practitioners of art that doesn't quite fit is how to find the theory that fits us. The start of that journey has to be a critical self-examination where tricky questions about our practice and its relation to the wider world are asked. This can be a harsh and uncomfortable process, especially when engaged in collectively in an already fragile and precarious scene. But it is from this culture of criticism and honest appraisal that a more robust and, ultimately, more meaningful and relevant practice can emerge. It seems to me that the live art scene is a good place from which to start along that road.

Pseudo Press Release

Patrick Coyle

Please Note: a film in the first gallery includes scenes of an adult nature, please speak to a member of the artist for further advice has established a reputation for making a new series of films with open sources as diverse as controversial figures such as the political activist somewhere between Las Vegas and Blackpool, or the quixotic car manufacturer living in the next gallery viewers will sit for minutes and no one will leave with all kinds of seaside culture, often working collaboratively, often transforming the gallery, often involving other artists and local community, taking inspiration from a pioneering educator and activist who reinterpreted the advertising slogans and imagery of consumer culture, who imbues the medium with a freshness that is remarkable mark making process in posters, prints and textiles, weaving together emotive films from found footage and original videos exploring the pleasure of the delicate act of mixing a diverse range of metaphors to undergo varying levels of manipulation and repetition with an accompanying soundtrack heightening the emotional and psychological range of original genitalia scratched out to generate meaning through abundance, to comply with censorship laws, the lack of legibility counterbalanced by suggesting a strong sense of mood that might tell circuitous and multi-layered stories to the last gallery, where fast-paced performances and audio recordings accompanied by a visual script of slide projections, photocopies and other found ephemera, and characterised by fragments of information, detours, dead ends, all narrated with a breathless, persuasive form of research so as to seem tentatively real while at the same time some or all of the events in these absurd tales may never have occurred at all the same time conjuring live seductive spoken word wall paintings that might be all at once appealing and disconcerting, researching the recent in order to construct idiosyncratic narratives and associations to draw a common line through the rhythm of rhyming cultural mining history and the sublime.

Please Note: the artist was born and currently lives and works in performance frequently completed MFA recently employing London based approaches to Goldsmiths developing investigative themes and graduated from the Glasgow narrative utilising pedagogic research

as a medium between interdisciplinary practice through which work can soon be seen to interrogate ambiguous notions of value that problematise what is at stake presupposing to investigate the viewer's knowledge of historical sites of production of meaning material objects within the context of administrative aesthetics raising questions that examine potential future collaborative uses of the defined visuality of the page in archival and literary modes of fiction as a starting point for the mechanisms of a stage from which to form a point of departure.

Please Notes to editors: we are very pleased to be working with our corporate partnership in order to crucially provide you agree to our sponsor's use of cookies with a personalised browsing experience (as explained in our privacy policy) to host an exhibition celebrating new developments in contemporary art, as our sponsor supporting the arts for more than twenty years together building a better working world, while not limited to the boardroom and the office but to a thriving artistic environment is integral to such healthy community, such buoyant economy such as we move both nationally and internationally into the next phase of our commitment to helping facilitate our largest collaboration with the biggest sponsor of a single arts organisation in London over the next three years moving forward between two internationally recognised institutions and proud of our benefits felt beyond London also extending support structures to corporate members and many galleries around the country to help build a better working world for visitors and clients and people and communities in which they work.

For further information: please contact the gallery @Google+ and its sponsors at all Instagram images are subject to copyright and gallery approval must be granted prior to reproduction will only accept unsolicited submissions sent by email but cannot guarantee a response, and any material sent to the gallery will not be returned and portfolios will not be viewed without prior arrangement and to stay in touch, join online discussions or see the latest news, connect with us in the Facebook places Pinterest listed Tumblr below Twitter our tweeting Flickr curators RSS feed their baby their YouTube when there's so few changing facilities.

Writing Beyond Resurrection

Emma Cocker

In conventional terms, the task of the actor is one of breathing life into a given script, enlivening the already written such that it has a presence in the present. Written — past participle of the verb ‘to write’, time lapsed from the live of writing; living language momentarily suspended as the noun of letters congealing across the page. The actor (and indeed a text’s reader) re-animates the written form with the experience of the temporal, pulse and breath of time itself. Allowing it to live again, to be lived again. Resurrection — the act of rising from the dead. Revival — restoration to life or vitality, a re-awakening. Perhaps live art involves an attempt to bypass the process of resurrection or restitution, the cultivation of tactics through which language is left live, kept alive, or otherwise retains the properties of living.

At times, the performance itself becomes a script of sorts for eliciting the unexpected gasps and phatic speech acts of the audience. Here, certain utterances can only be hoped for, cannot be rehearsed: laughter’s rising; the sound of empathy exhaled in collective breath, sharp intake of surprise, comfort suddenly unsettled. Other utterances are rather hoped avoided: twittering whisper of disengagement; muffled mobile calls; untimely giggles; bored yawns, that recurrent cough. Or perhaps the audience is the script, an unruly bundle of triggers and prompts against which the performer rallies. Live performance — less a text to be read then, as an unpredictable assemblage of potential cues and provocations. At times, a language void of written language, performed in the absence of written script, wordless even, mute. A language of gesture and of movement, of visual phrase and breath’s spacing; writing of the body. Or else the script remains purposefully present, comment on the pretense of theatre, its habitual hiding of writing’s lines. Deconstruction of the construct, of a system whose audience is coaxed to forget the physical presence of written script, attend only to the live of spoken words unfolding. Or attention might be drawn to the back-stage texts of performance, its stage directions, notational inscriptions, instructional cues, the rules of the game. Indeed, there are times when rules are being written (live) as the game is being played; new languages emerge only through the process of being spoken. Live unfurling of an immanent language, a coming into language. Intimate words conjured at the interstice between performer and guest, a conversational duet; embodied co-production. Or maybe the visibly present script signals a making-visible of the improvisatory act

¹ Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva*, (New Directions, 2012), originally published in 1973, p.3.

² Lispector, pp.3–4.

of translation, the kairotic art of the live re-mix or edit, the weave of text fragments already known or written, reworked towards the still unknown, order unrepeatably. Kairos — quality of timeliness or of timing in speech and action, the capacity for seizing opportunities; art of speaking and listening at one and the same time. Practice of receptivity and of invention — the performativity of a language open to what the changing situation affords.

Live language. Language gleaned from life. Cuts and extracts from the everyday, from conversations overheard or witnessed. Spoken testimony — an attesting to experience and to the experiential, to the live event of being-there. Live-ness of a voice still touched in the present by the recollection of an encounter now past, and the live-ness of an encounter with that voice, there in the dark. Fragility. Mortality. Humanity. Time passed and time still passing. Where is the present tense of language: in the act of speaking or of listening? Technology has enabled the possibility of a gap or lag in transmission between speech and its reception; the speaker and listener no longer must share space or time. There are certain events and speech acts that cross time zones or geographies, that somehow retain their presence, their urgency; their perpetual sense of now. Temporal loopholes. Words spoken back then, heard now. There, now here. Recorded voice can be felt in the present as though it were not of the past. Its significance can accrue over time, becoming more vivid, poignant, more vital and alive as the years pass by. Living is a condition open to change and growth, to evolving and adapting. An archival tendency often strives to stop this process still in its tracks, capture documents for posterity. So what constitutes a living archive? Performance/document. Live/dead. Binary definitions miss nuance. Technologies can display a live-ness of their own; live performance can sometimes lack pulse.

Live might not always be lively; there is agency in action and inaction. Between one state and another, there is a range of possibility. A: zone of the neutral prefix, law of opposites paused. Atemporal here are forms of practice that willfully inhabit these intervals and indeterminacies. Like writing?

Technology creates the conditions for new forms of live writing, the incessant babbling of real-time commentary, compression of the feedback loop such that reflection happens live to the event itself. Yet without sufficient gap or distance, reflection might lack depth, performed as the act of simply reflecting back, like a mirror, repeating, rather than reflecting on. Reflection (on) is an art of meditation, thought oscillating between the exterior realm of stimulus and the interior realm of response; hinge between self and world, past and present, known and not-yet-known. Reflection — from reflectere: to bend, to turn away. To reflect on live-ness is a troublesome pursuit, requiring one's attention is kept on the present (now), whilst at the same time bent back, turned elsewhere. So, how to write of live-ness, of live art? How can the fixity of words on the page meet the experience of that which is endlessly disappearing as soon as it is coming into being? This is not just a question for live performance, for live art, but arguably also a writer's preoccupation in and of itself. "Let me tell you" says Clarice Lispector, "I'm trying to seize the fourth dimension of this instant-now so fleeting that it's already gone because it's already become a new instant-now that's also already gone."¹

Here, a writing not wanting to be written (then resurrected by the reader), but rather striving to remain writing: 'And to capture the present, forbidden by its very nature: the present slips away and the instant too, I am this very second forever in the now'.²

Principles for how to do community through criticism by participants in the Live Art Development Agency DIY 11 project Criticism is Community by Gillie Kleiman

- Use evidence (experience is also evidence)
- The criticism should share the criteria the work proposes, or highlight the break in agendas
- Only do it if you're contributing
- Own your criticism
- Solicit the criticism you want
- Remember: the artwork is not a person
- Work through failure
- Reply to criticism if you like, but it can be regrettable
- Recognise the common vulnerability of artist and critic
- Artist and critic are equally engaged in their own crafts and practices
- Acknowledge that "artist" and "critic" are not fixed identities but action – anyone can do either or both
- Be aware that though words are the primary tool employed and writing the primary artform engaged in criticism, they are not the sole methods
- Acknowledge and value the multiple modes of criticism, including the informal
- Practise the fact that artist and critic are not a closed loop
- Curators and producers: because you are sometimes part of these loops, stake your claim generously and clearly
- Remember that both artmaking and criticism involve listening – and that to whom or what and how much determines the outcome

3. Contexts

'Context is half the work.'

Artist Placement Group (APG), statement of methodology, in Structure in Events, 1972

'I found art could be realized in remarkable ways working in the spaces where people's lives played out. There, art could have meaning, and could matter to anyone because what the artist and audience cared about were the same.'

An Interview with Mary Jane Jacob, Public Art: Consequences of a Gesture?, on-curating.org, 2013

'If we understand place as an unstable, shifting set of political, social, economic and material relations, and locality as produced and contested through a set of conditions that we might describe as situation, our experience of works which truly produce remarkable engagements with place will be characterized by a sense of dislocation - encouraging us no longer to look with eyes of a tourist, but to become implicated in the jostling contingency of mobilities and relations that constitute contemporaneity.'

Claire Doherty, Situation, 2009

'..our audiences, although non traditional arts audiences, are incredibly sophisticated. They make really sophisticated choices every minute of the day about what they want to see and what they want to do. And I think we've got to have some kind of respect for that, really.'

Mark Ball, We Love You, 2005

The Context for Compass Live Art

Annie Lloyd

Compass was formed by Karen Watson, Sarah Spanton and Annie Lloyd to support the development of live art practices in the region. Karen is the co-founder and director of East Street Arts, Annie had managed the Gallery and Studio Theatre at Leeds Met and Sarah, a practising artist, had undertaken a couple of years research and networking to articulate the aspirations and needs of practitioners in Yorkshire. There followed a pilot project in which Compass partnered with artist-led groups around the region to deliver professional development, sector meetings and platform events. We set up a website, live art directory, e-news and a symposium and festival in 2011.

The aims of Compass reflected the interests of its founders, namely:

- Socially engaged practice
- Live Art in the public realm
- Audience development
- Partnership working

We don't have ownership over any of these complex terms. For some they may be hobgoblins of art-speak and top-down, policy driven arts funding. For us they are an attempt at articulating an approach. We are on a critical journey – we make, we do, we talk, we think. There are important emerging and established artists whose work should be supported. There is the question, who is this work for, and the desire to make it available with as few barriers to participation as possible.

How do we know what work is important? That is the big question at the heart of all curation, evaluation, funding decisions and audience reaction. For us it's about questioning norms, eschewing cliché, challenging the sentimental and celebrating the genuine while knowing that every one of those expressions is contentious. It is having the courage to try anyway. It is finding that which moves us, me, you. It is risking an expression of taste that won't suit everyone. It is to question if collective and communal feeling is altogether positive or potentially dangerous and feel OK about the question being out there, rather than insisting on the answer. And after all is said and done, it's very personal and based on experience.

Compass Live Art, now co-directed by Annie Lloyd and Peter Reed, produces Compass Festival which is conceived as a gift to the city, a way of putting arts and non-arts attenders in touch with new practices. The work comes first then we seek partners to help us present it. Sometimes these partners are established venues because the work requires it and we encourage venues to take pieces they may not normally programme. – a very particular task. So, in 2014, Reckless Sleepers premiered *Negative Space*, highly choreographed, non-verbal, explosive work. Kings of England made an elegy to ageing and family, *Where We Live & What We Live For (Parts 1 & 2)*. We recruited 16 Leeds children to perform Forced Entertainment's study in childhood and parenting, *That Night Follows Day*. And Helen Cole's *We See Fireworks* filled Gallery Munro House with moving audio pieces recounting extraordinary performance events remembered by those who witnessed them.

We produced ten other pieces around the city, free to all and accessible in public spaces. Each piece commissioned or selected was considered for its quality and the way it engaged with audiences. Issues of instrumentality and potential exploitation were discussed with artists and between ourselves. Each conversation was about how people would engage with the work, what was in it for them, what might they take away with them, in what ways was the artist trying to connect. Each project required different kinds of interaction. Rita Marcalo worked with elderly residents in a Leeds care home whose infirmities kept them from physically being at the festival. They created duets that Rita learned and took out on the streets inviting people to dance a duet created by Enid, Cynthia, Betty, Josephine or Winn. Quarantine with *Between us, we know everything* invited people in Burley, Chapeltown and

Leeds Market to video record something they knew to upload to an ever-growing database attempting to reflect all our knowledge and experience. See all the projects:

www.compassliveart.org.uk

Artist development is important to Compass: whether it is mature artists such as Katie Etheridge and Simon Persighetti pursuing their research into collaborative practice with *Personal Shopper* – a long term project over three years with two further residencies planned in Leeds Kirkgate Market working with traders and shoppers; or early career artists such as Jade Pollard-Crowe newly graduated and showing for the first time in a public space *Because My Vogue is Your Vogue* – teenage girls with carefully applied beards vogueing through the largest shopping centre in Europe. Compass provides intensive production support beforehand and during the festival and follow-up meetings to discuss the outcomes and ways forward. We develop relationships not just bookings.

Compass recognises that there are dozens of artist-led groups in Yorkshire and more emerging all the time. What we do is create connections between practitioners in different parts of a very large region and partner with them to create events and platforms that best serve their needs. Our professional development programme is led by an artist/curator. We invite a different practitioner each year to bring their own interests into the programme. This approach affords us flexibility and responsiveness to changing concerns and new practices.

It felt to me after the Studio Theatre closed that some artists would struggle to be seen in Leeds and Yorkshire –artists who had been seen and loved and new artists for whom the conventional restraints of theatre and gallery presentation were irrelevant. Compass Live Art and Compass Festival allow us to support contemporary practice in ways that suit the artist, bring a wider audience than the 90 seat venue ever could – the last festival engaged with 6,000 people in 11 days – and position Live Art as a significant practice for culture not commerce in the public realm.

Oui Performance: Performance Art in the City of York

Victoria Gray & Nathan Walker

Rather than forfeiting political and aesthetic risk, Gray and Walker appear more content to program more conceptually challenging work that positively antagonises the limits of an art form, rather than protecting it. Innovative and trenchant, Oui Performance continues to survive and thrive in what I hope could become a permanent zone of autonomy.¹

The scene and being seen

Oui Performance was founded in 2010, as an artist-led curatorial collaboration, based in York, North Yorkshire. At that time, the infrastructure for experimental performance in the UK was markedly different.² Critically, there were no artist-led platforms dedicated to programming the work of emerging artists who identified their work as performance art or action art. Indeed, live art and experimental theatre, in the UK at least, were already recognised categories with well-established venues, networks, infrastructures and, thus, funding.³ Without wishing to fuel an unproductive and antagonistic debate about the differences between live art and performance art, we had however experienced difficulty in getting our own work programmed within the context of existing live art and experimental theatre venues and festivals. Shifting our awareness to our artistic peer group and other emerging performance artists in the UK, we found a similar unfit.⁴

This acute experiential awareness of 'not fitting in' served to highlight the underlying, and often invisible politics of representation, curation and funding within the ecology of experimental performance in the UK.

Thus, the establishment of a new network for emerging performance artists, outside of the already established live art and experimental theatre frameworks was immanent. Despite our desire to nurture the ecology of practices closer to home, our search for existing models of artist-led, performance art networks, led us to research national and international networks and groups. Artist-led organisations such as Bbeyond⁵ (Belfast, Northern Ireland), PAErsche (NRW, Germany)⁶ and, IPA (International Performance Association)⁷ were formative to our development as an organisation, and, to our establishment within an international network of artist peers. Our inception was therefore considered an action, in direct response to the lack of equivalent networks for performance art within the UK, but more specifically, within the Yorkshire region. Put simply, a context for our work

didn't exist, so we made one. A network for our work didn't exist, so we made one.⁸

The work and how it works

Our critical, curatorial approach was to commission new, solo and collaborative works, by emerging artists with diverse approaches to performance art. In addition, we were interested in performance work that existed at the intersection of practices such as performance art, actionism, live art, sound art, body art, intervention, choreography, writing, sculpture and drawing, for example. It became clear that such practices had fallen through the cracks in mainstream programming, precisely because they existed in the interstices. As such, the artists and practices that we have chosen to work with are uneasy hybrids, and, are often underrepresented because they are unrepresentable within the spatial and temporal limitations of mainstream performance venues and certain large-scale festival formats. For example, in *Bleak Actions* (2011), we worked with artists whose work challenged conventions of site and duration. Artist Bean realised a durational work in a tattoo studio, whereby audiences were invited to watch her leg being tattooed,⁹ and, artist Christopher Mollon performed a site-specific work on the banks of the river Ouse between the hours of sunrise and sunset. By eschewing black box, theatre or gallery-based contexts, and, by presenting day-long and sometimes week-long durational works, these artists demonstrated the need for presentational formats outside of common touring networks and performance festivals, both of which stipulate certain restrictions on site and duration. In *Live Series* (2010 – 2011), we programmed artists whose work questioned the politics and representation of the body (both human and animal) in artistic, social and political contexts. The actions, gestures, materials and objects employed were often

controversial and challenging for audiences due to their visceral nature and the way they foregrounded sensitive issues of power and violence. For example, artist Mark Greenwood held a pair of scissors to a woman's throat, until palpable tensions caused the woman to reverse the action and hold the scissors to his. Referencing this severing action, Greenwood held the head of a found, dead bird in his hand, whilst, a sheep's skull watched from a plinth in the corner of the room. Other artists chose to question the politics of the body, violence and power through a more playful critique of the representational codes of performance art itself. Ewa Rybska and Wladyslaw Kazmierczak confronted each other holding a real bow and arrow and plastic machine guns in a critique of Ulay and Abramovic's *Rest Energy* (1980). Later the pair constructed a painful image, binding each other's faces in raw red meat.¹⁰ In *Action Art Now* (2011-12), we programmed regional, national and international artists who were also involved in artist-led organisation of performance art in their own localities.

For example, Poppy Jackson (Liminal Bodies & Site Space, London, UK), Alastair MacLennan, Hugh O'Donnell & Leo Devlin (Bbeyond, NI, UK), Ieke Trinks (Performance Art Event, Netherlands), Maria Dos Milagres (Epipiderme, Lisbon, Portugal) and Dominic Thorpe (Unit 1 & The Performance Collective, Dublin, Ireland). Through the presentation of these artists' works, the program simultaneously surveyed the current networks, and, forged new connections within an international network of emerging performance artists. As a result, the artists we presented in *Action Art Now*, and in our other programs, became our new network. Critically, this network has been maintained, and, in the last five years, the network has grown on an international scale.¹¹

Now Action Art

Reflecting on the disciplinary infidelities and institutional resistance articulated above, we have both playfully invented and seriously adopted 'new' terms to articulate the radical hybridism of the practices within our network; *technotextual*, *subsociochoreohybrid*, *phonobjectactionism*, and, *biosculturalsubjectivism*. As neologisms, these strange hybrid terms positively emphasise the ongoing struggle to represent such practices in already known languages and forms, and, to situate such practices in already existing performance networks and presentational frameworks. Our ongoing desire therefore is to support artists that are unafraid to question these entrenched disciplinary boundaries, thereby antagonising the limits of their art form and the infrastructures for experimental performance in the UK.

Echoing this, at our inception in 2010, Oui Performance articulated these core values in the following manifesto-like statements:

Work against performance arts disappearance under commerce and normative hierarchies covertly operating within contemporary art culture.

Actively encourage difficult modes of artistic production and consumption.

Focus on the local situation.

Create makeshift temporary shelters for the post-spectacle generation of pro-sumeractionists.

Disorganise organised systems, self organise to decentralise.

Make a social space, physical and conceptual for transitory actionists to meet.

In the present, these values hold true, despite the deeply worrying political changes in the arts, culture and education sectors that have made realising these statements profoundly challenging.

On the ground, these changes have made funding and supporting marginal artists and artist-led organisations such as Oui Performance all the more difficult, but perhaps for that reason, the action of doing so, against the odds, becomes all the more critical.

¹ Mark Greenwood, 'Action Art Now #3 Oui Performance Space 109, York' Living Gallery, 2012, www.livinggallery.info/text/york1 [Accessed December 2014]

² At the time of our inception, organizations such as]performance space[(London), festivals such as Buzzcut (Glasgow) and ACE funded consortiums such as Compass Live Art (Yorkshire), did not exist.

³ For example: Venues such as the Greenroom (Manchester), Chelsea Theatre (London), Battersea Arts Center (London), and, Arnolfini (Bristol); Festivals such as NRLA (Glasgow), Spill Festival (London) and Fierce Festival (Birmingham).

⁴ See Victoria Gray. 'For]performance space[' Living Gallery (2014) www.livinggallery.info/text/victoria_gray [Accessed January 2015]

⁵ Bbeyond Belfast www.bbeyondperformanceartweb.wordpress.com/

⁶ PAErsche - Performance Activities Cologne Region www.paersche.org

⁷ IPA - International Performance Association www.ipapress.i-pa.org

⁸ A crucial part of forming a network involved recording and critically reflecting upon its inception, see Victoria Gray. 'Beyond Necessity: Can we save performance, or, can performance save itself?' in *Live Art Almanac Volume 3*, eds by Lois Keidan and Wright (UK: Live Art Development Agency & Oberon Books); Victoria Gray. and Nathan Walker, 'Out of Time: Group Action and Temporary Autonomous Zone, almost', 2011, www.ouiperformance.org.uk/files/outoftimeouiperformance.pdf [Accessed December 2014]

⁹ Victoria Gray, 'Shattered Scattered: Bleak Actions in York' 2014, www.ouiperformance.org.uk/files/beanbleakvgray.pdf [Accessed December 2014]

¹⁰ Malgorzata Kazmierczak, 'The transcendental deduction / relation in time. An interview with Wladyslaw Kazmierczak about two performances' Living Gallery, 2011 www.livinggallery.info/text/kazmierczak [Accessed January 2015]

¹¹ For an extended list of our performance art network, see: www.ouiperformance.org.uk/links

The Context of Live Art Bistro

Adam Young

In the last year I would say that half of the arts activity that I attended in Leeds was housed in temporary space. The unused, and often under the radar, spaces that pepper the city centre of Leeds and beyond are reclaimed as momentary hubs for studios, showcases, exhibitions, platforms, talks, workshops and informal gatherings. Since its conception in the summer of 2012 Live Art Bistro has occupied a string of such spaces. Some more publically than others. Our current space is our most ambitious, occupying 6000 square feet of an old car show room, just minutes away from institutions such as the West Yorkshire Playhouse and Northern Ballet. Live Art Bistro was established as a reaction to the lack of opportunities for artists working in live art in Leeds. There simply wasn't a venue willing to take the risks needed to develop and present the kind of work we were interested in. Tired of knocking down doors we built our own and then left them wide open. LAB has been instrumental in shaping and developing a community of artists who are brought together by common difference. Each year our community grows as a result of artists moving to the city and graduates deciding to make a base here. Next on the horizon is critical mass – an essential factor in making a scene sustainable.

As anyone using temporary space will know, the lack of security and little to no budgets can be at times an exhausting carousel ride. Staying light on your feet with the prospect of a 2 week notice for eviction means that it becomes increasingly hard to embed yourself into the fabric of the city and to develop a sustained audience. 2015 marks the year Live Art Bistro makes positive steps to professionalise what we do. However we are ardently clear that this does not mean we become laboured with bureaucratic systems that undermine our flexibility to be responsive to the needs of the community we are here to support.

An unavoidable issue is that of money. How we become sustainable as we evolve from temporary to permanent space is (as with anything DIY) an 'on the job' learning process. If the aim is to pay ourselves for our time and continue to offer opportunities to artists and to pay them for their work then a business model must be applied that does not require us relying on continued core support from the over stretched Arts Council England.

Every indication we have seen predicts that things will not be getting better anytime soon. But it is by no means doom and gloom.

This challenge provides the circumstances and opportunity for new ways of working to emerge. For us audience development is the key to our success. In the last three years as a programmer of live art I have worked with community groups in socially deprived areas, homelessness charities, social activist groups, music promoters, music festivals, graphics students, branding companies and their clients, children and young people, film directors, scientists and increasingly the (non arts educated) general public. In some cases these exchanges have been meaningful and lasting whilst others have failed spectacularly. A continued approach of meeting new audiences and finding new ways to strike up dialogue around live art is key to our survival as a viable arts organisation in Leeds. Along with Compass Festival we are keen to demystify the term 'live art' and offer it up to a wider public. We have to respect our audience and make efforts to keep live art visible rather than marginalising it. Even though Live Art Bistro is a venue we can not afford to keep our activities behind closed doors but must instead engage in places where the impact of what we do will be highest.

Whether naively or stubborn headedly, my approach to engaging a public in live art is to present both the language and the environment which it inhabits in a way that is familiar and friendly, whilst preserving the autonomy and integrity of artists and their work. In Compass Festival works such as Jade Pollard-Crowe's *Because My Vogue Is Your Vogue* and Rita Macarlo's *Dancing With Strangers* used the public realm as the site for interventions which looked familiar and yet were each in their own way quietly subversive of site and

deeply transgressive. In *Because My Vogue is Your Vogue* Jade had set up a beauty counter in the busy walkways of Trinity Shopping Center. Women were invited to be made over with a designer beard of real hair glued to the skin. Passers by were repulsed as teenagers and young woman willingly took up the opportunity to queer their identities and challenge the normative demands of beauty and femininity. Each participant carrying the artwork with them as they continued their shopping. Granted, the primary audience for Live Art Bistro is always going to be arts aficionados but if we are to remain relevant we must always be mindful of a wider public.

Who are we?

In the introduction we wrote about a ‘criticality’ that recognises the critic’s own limitations. So you might well ask: ‘from what position do the contributors and editors of this publication, speak?’ Well, here you can read short biographies. We (the editors) purposefully selected a range of contributors who sit firmly within, on the edge of or outside the field of ‘live art’ because we thought they would bring insightful perspectives. For our own part we are both artists from a visual arts background and this inevitably influences our range of references. A publication edited by someone who comes to live art by way of theatre, dance or literature would most likely have a different shape.

This publication was supported by Live Art UK, the national network of Live Art venues, festivals and facilitators, of which Compass Live Art is a member. Co-editor Yvonne Carmichael was Programme Manager for Compass in 2014-15 but did not work on Compass Festival itself. We are grateful to co-directors Annie Lloyd and Peter Reed for being very hands off with this publication and for letting us write what we wanted.

Contributor Biographies

Andy Abbott

Andy is an artist, writer and musician living and working in West Yorkshire. In 2012 he was awarded his practice-led PhD with a thesis on ‘art, self-organised cultural activity and the production of postcapitalist subjectivity’. He has exhibited and performed internationally as an individual artist and as a member of the art collective Black Dogs. He plays music as That Fucking Tank, Nope and Elizabeth. As Fellow in Music at the University of Bradford, Andy initiated the arts and music festivals Bradford Threadfest and RECON. He is currently working on a book about the politics of self-organised art and music entitled ‘DIY Bother?’

www.andyabbott.co.uk

Yvonne Carmichael

Yvonne is an artist and curator based in Bradford. Recent roles have included Programme Manager at Compass Live Art, Artist Programme Manager at South Square Gallery, Project Manager at Beam and Director of Community Interest Company Art in Unusual Spaces. In her own practice she is interested in representation and performance; between politics and playfulness; and between the serious and the fun as well as how the body interacts with public spaces. Internationally she has undertaken a 4 month artist residency at Cittadellarte Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella (Italy) and has spent 100 days working on a number of the 'Activated Projects' at dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel (Germany).

www.yvonnecarmichael.com

Emma Cocker

Emma Cocker is a writer-artist and Reader in Fine Art at Nottingham Trent University. Operating under the title Not Yet There, her work addresses the endeavour of creative labour, focusing on models of (art) practice and subjectivity that resist the pressure of a single, stable position by remaining willfully unresolved. Cocker's writing has been published in *Failure*, 2010; *Hyperdrawing: Beyond the Lines of Contemporary Art*, 2012; *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, 2013, and *Reading/Feeling*, 2013.

www.not-yet-there.blogspot.com

Patrick Coyle

Patrick Coyle is an artist and writer from Hull. Recent performances and exhibitions include Pump House Gallery, London; Whitechapel Gallery, London; Bonnefantenmuseum, The Netherlands; Kunsthal Aarhus, Denmark; Royal College of Art, London; Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery; The Poetry Library, Royal Festival Hall, London; and Spike Island, Bristol (all 2014). In 2015 Coyle will present new work at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London, ANDOR Gallery, London and in The Cambridge Literary Review.

www.patrickcoyle.info

Amelia Crouch

Amelia Crouch is a visual artist whose work begins with words, as either content or inspiration. Her artistic output includes videos, prints and texts – made for both gallery and public-realm locations. Recent projects include a commission with Pavilion, Leeds and a residency at The Art House, Wakefield. As an arts project manager she has worked for organisations including Leeds Met Gallery, The Northern Art Prize and PSL.

www.ameliacrouch.com

Gillie Kleiman

Gillie Kleiman is an artist. From Gillie's practice of dance and choreography emerge performances, texts, and events presented in contexts associated with dance, theatre, and live art. Gillie is one of a group of artists who write for, edit and organise the activities of BELLYFLOP Magazine, and she has moonlit as an Artistic Assessor for Arts Council England since 2010. She is an AHRC/TECHNE funded PhD researcher at Roehampton University.

Annie Lloyd

Annie Lloyd is co-director, with Peter Reed, of Compass Live Art founded to develop live art practice and infrastructure in Yorkshire. Annie curated The Compass Festival in 2011 and 2014. Formerly she was Director of The Gallery and Studio Theatre at Leeds Met University. She is a board member of Forced Entertainment, TC Blah Blah Blah and Flare Festival. She is a member of IETM (Informal European Theatre Meeting) and represents Compass as a member of Live Art UK.

www.compassliveart.org.uk

Harold Offeh

Harold Offeh is an artist whose work encompasses performance, participation, video and photography. His work employs humour and explores aspects of contemporary culture. He lives in Cambridge and works in London and Leeds where he is a senior lecturer in Fine Art at Leeds Beckett University. Recent projects include: *THE SHADOWS TOOK SHAPE*, Studio Museum Harlem (NYC, USA, 2013-14) and *RADIOCITY*, A curatorial learning project with Marion Harrison, Tate Britain (London 2014 -15)

www.haroldoffeh.com

Gill Park

Gill Park is director of Pavilion, a visual arts commissioning organisation based in Leeds. She is also undertaking doctoral research at the University of Leeds, looking at the intersection between feminism and photography in the 1980s. She has a particular interest in art as feminist and post-colonial critique.

www.pavilion.org.uk

Adam Young

Live Artist, festival director, arts facilitator & venue swashbuckler. Adam Young has built up a reputation over the past three years for creating space for extraordinary and unpredictable experiences that happen in a variety of sites and contexts. Adam Young is co-founder of Indivisible & Artistic Director of Live Art Bistro, Impossible Lecture and (in)Xclusion.

www.indivisible.eu







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Image credits

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- 2 & 3. Instant Dissidence, *Dancing with Strangers*
4. Jade Pollard-Crowe, *Because My Vogue is Your Vogue*
5. Jade Pollard-Crowe, *Because My Vogue is Your Vogue*
6. Sylvia Rimat, *Imagine Us*
8. Brian Lobel, *You Have to Forgive Me, You Have to Forgive Me, You Have to Forgive Me.*
9. Quarantine, *Between us, we know everything*
10. Quarantine, *Between us, we know everything*

11. Forced Entertainment, *That Night Follows Day*
12. Forced Entertainment, *That Night Follows Day*
13. Invisible Flock, *If You Go Away, Chapter 1*
14. Kings of England, *Where We Live & What We Live For (Parts 1 & 2)*
15. Live Art Bistro Ben Mills, *Companion*
16. Katie Etheridge and Simon Persighetti, *Personal Shopper*
17. Selina Thomson, *Pat it, prick it and mark it with 'B'*

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Unruly Utterances

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www.compassliveart.org.uk

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www.liveartuk.org

