

Ecologies and Economies of the Artist-led: Place, Space, Futures

Symposium in Leeds, UK, Friday 26 and Saturday 27 October 2018

Friday: Music and Arts Production (MAP), Hope Foundry on Mabgate, central Leeds.

Saturday: School of Fine Art, History of Art & Cultural Studies, University of Leeds.

Convened by the Artist-led Research Group (Leeds) in partnership with Yorkshire and Humberside Visual Arts Network [YVAN], University of Leeds, and Music and Arts Production [MAP Charity]

Open Call for Proposals

We invite proposals addressing any of the following central themes:

- Art after gentrification
- Cultural and planning policy
- Place and space
- Modes of collective practice
- Alternative economies
- Futures of the Artist-led
- Artists and civic responsibility

Proposals are not limited to these themes and we welcome experimental contributions such as performances, co-written papers, workshop ideas and short videos. We welcome proposals for 20-minute presentations, which should include:

- Title and type of proposal
- Applicant's identification (name, institutional affiliation, country and email)
- Abstract (up to 300 words) or visuals (up to a max of 5 references)
- Short curriculum vitae (up to 200 words for each presenter)
- Please also indicate what resources, financial or otherwise, are required

Proposals should be sent to artistledresearchgroup@gmail.com. Enquiries about the symposium should also be sent to this address.

The deadline for submissions is **Friday 28 September**. Selection will be made by a small panel of ARG contributors, who will work with presenters to secure resources required to deliver their contribution.

Places at the symposium are FREE but limited. Information on booking, travel and accommodation will be released shortly.

Symposium

The challenges for artist-led activity in urban centres, in the current climate of increasing privatisation, a market driven art world and corporate real-estate speculation, cannot be ignored. This perfect storm is arguably eroding traditional models, leading to increasing scarcity of space in which artist-led organisations, collectives and projects can develop – beyond the current wave of 'pop-up' temporary opportunities.

The Mabgate area of Leeds is historically rich in alternative and self-organised spaces and venues but under immediate threat from the rapid encroachment of new residential building encouraged by the recent arrival of the nearby 'Victoria' retail and leisure development. This is not a theoretical situation. It is a reality that is radically impacting on an area around which has historically been home to many arts organisations fundamental to culture in the city including MAP, East Street Arts, Lady Beck Studios, Studio 24, Koby Dance studios, and

Live Art Bistro. But now the city centre is expanding, and the pace and scale of development is accelerating rapidly. Lady Beck Studios has closed, Studio 24 and Koby Dance studios are losing their space imminently and other organisations are being priced out by developers with offices registered in Mayfair. So what can we do? How can we fight? And what is our responsibility as artists to do so? The displacement of Mabgate's creative community, and immediate threat to MAP's continuing tenure in its home of ten years there, forms a specific context and backdrop for the questions that the symposium seeks to frame.

In a parallel narrative there is strong evidence that capital investment projects 'follow' the movement of artist-led activities such as in Shoreditch (London, UK), The Lower East Side (New York, USA) and Hamburg (Germany). On the other hand, these processes of displacement and gentrification meet resistance globally in the form of community land trusts, activist art and socially engaged projects, creating alternative and networked economies existing largely outside of more formal cultural frameworks. These socio-political movements are generating new hybridised art and business enterprises which problematise the role of contemporary art and further erode the boundaries between the infamous 'art-washing' of local low-income communities, and the possibility of meaningful change.

What next then for artist-led urban futures? Are new structures and partnerships (with commercial developers, HE institutions and others) possible and desirable, or will artist-led practice continue to be either pushed to the margins, or needing to surrender to the requirements of increasingly centralised and progressively competitive arts funding mechanisms?

This event has been generated through the convening of the contributor-led Artist-led Research Group [ARG] which has been meeting in Leeds as a reading group since September 2017. The group comprises researchers, artists and arts professionals and operates on an entirely voluntary basis. The symposium is staged on minimal financial resources but has secured a small contribution from the University of Leeds. We are continuing to seek additional funding.

<https://artistledresearchgroup.wordpress.com>

YVAN provides a voice and advocates for the region's visual arts sector through a programme that effects change in the profile, reputation and sustainability of the visual arts in Yorkshire & the Humber, and is part of the national CVAN network (www.cvan.art).

<http://www.yvan.org.uk>

Music and Arts Production [MAP] registered as a charity in 2008 to deliver creative training to young people. They now provide BTEC qualifications in Creative Media and Art & Design, alongside Maths and English tuition, to 11-16 year olds who are struggling within the traditional school system. The charity operates on a sustainable model for how education and creative businesses can interact and innovate.

<https://mapcharity.org>

