

# ART?QUEST

CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT. PRACTICAL SUPPORT.

London, England

[www.artquest.org.uk](http://www.artquest.org.uk)

Free

## WE ARE 5

*"Art is making something out of nothing and selling it" Frank Zappa.*

ARTQUEST IS 5 AND, AS WE ALL KNOW, A LOT HAS HAPPENED SINCE 2001.

WHEN LAUNCHED, WE WERE ONE OF ONLY A HANDFUL OF REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS PROVIDING HIGH-QUALITY ADVICE, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT DEDICATED TO THE VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS COMMUNITY.

NOW, ARTQUEST IS RECOGNISED AS BEING AT THE FOREFRONT OF PROVIDING BESPOKE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR LONDON'S PRACTITIONERS. SO, WE'VE DECIDED TO CELEBRATE OUR 5TH BIRTHDAY BY USING IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO RE-EVALUATE THE WAY WE OPERATE, HOW WE DELIVER "STUFF" AND THE WAY IN WHICH WE ENGAGE AND WORK WITH ARTISTS AND CRAFTSPEOPLE.

We'd also reached 'critical mass' with the old artquest website, so we decided to totally redesign and rebuild it. The new website still has all the information and advice artists always want and need. However, we feel that our website, and new technologies in general, should increasingly encourage artists to be self-reliant, proactive and professional.

We also see our 5th birthday as an opportunity to develop other new and innovative non-web services: training, seminars,

conferences and events.

This modest 5 year publication was commissioned to consider where artists practice may be heading in the future. We wondered what ideas and ways of working were going to be increasingly relevant to practitioners, so we commissioned a varied group of artists, writers and curators for reflection and comment.

They have adopted a range of styles and approaches: conceptual, conversational, polemic. We hope you find them enjoyable, insightful and provocative.

**Totally New Website!** Users can find and access existing content more easily

Over 700 pages of information and advice for practitioners, covering aspects as diverse as international galleries, tax, VAT, legal advice, studios, articles on finding exhibitions, a comprehensive opportunities and listings section and much more

Markets don't just mean money. Artists increasingly utilise the web to buy, sell and barter products and services, as well as to collate and disseminate ideas and intellectual 'capital'. Supporting the prosperity and welfare of artists via our new website and other services is at the forefront of Artquest's future plans

Promoting 'practice-led professionalism', building upon previous successes by developing initiatives that incorporate the critical, practical and pragmatic aspects of being a professional artist. We believe Artquest should address issues of change within a more focussed, critical framework and that artists are best served by being allowed to develop their professional capabilities and aspirations during and through the process of making work

London's visual arts practitioners are cultivating international opportunities, collaborations and partnerships. These are now viewed as critical to artists' careers as home-grown ones. In response to this, and Arts Council England's recently published International Policy, Artquest is seeking ways in which to further promote and encourage international opportunities for visual artists and craftspeople in London (see page 8 for details)

After five fecund years of fastidiously sourcing and passing on the nitty-gritty of information, advice and professional development support for artists in London, Artquest is looking to refresh and renew itself. What better way to do so than to invite speculation on what the future might bring. Artquest 5 Years is an attempt by Artquest to extend its tentacles further into the area of critical debate and discussion; it hopes in the process to surface thoughts and ideas about what could lie ahead – in terms of both creative directions and of the professional and political landscape – for visual artists working both in London and further afield.

# Introducing Artquest 5 Years

Paul Glinkowski

The contributions to this publication seek to offer analysis and critique, as evidenced by The Manifesto Club and, to an extent, my own contribution, alongside a series of oblique creative meditations, delivered in their own personal [and in one case collaborative] style by the artists Rona Lee, Raimi Gbadamosi and CCRED/The alt.SPACE group. It is hoped that the eclectic mix of commentary that has emerged from this collective endeavour will spark new insights, impulses and ideas – and might perhaps even prompt rumblings of rebellion, or sow the seeds of fruitful discontent, in the readership.

## All that Glisters...

"Ladies and gentlemen, the Golden Age is, I believe, happening right here, right now."

Sir Christopher Frayling, Chair, Arts Council England

"Run for the shadows."

David Bowie

A cheerful consensus is being promulgated just now by our custodians of culture, the leaders of major galleries and performing arts venues and their paymasters in the Arts Council and government: that art and artists in this country have never had it so good. As the Blair premiership limps towards its bathetic denouement and much in our national and political culture seems to be going awry, this 'good news' story has been gleefully seized upon by the media as a cause for unbridled celebration. The Review section of The Observer newspaper on 15 October 2006, for example, ran a three-page feature under the cover story headline "Up the arts! Why culture in Britain is booming." Echoing the sentiments of Christopher Frayling, Observer scribe Rachel Cooke affirms: "This is a golden time for the arts in Britain; we have an embarrassment of riches on our hands." As evidence of the culture boom in the visual arts sector, Cooke points to the meteoric rise of the Frieze Art Fair ["Frieze has only existed since 2003 but it is now considered one of the best such events in the world."] and to attendance figures at Tate Modern ["4,147,549 visitors in 2004"]. "This is, I repeat," gushes Cooke, "a Great Time for the Arts."

There is no doubt that, in the wake of the lean years of Thatcherism, the advent of National Lottery funding for arts building projects in 1995, followed by a major uplift in government funding for the arts via the Arts Council's 'settlement' from the DCMS [Department for Culture, Media and Sport] in 2000 has provided a welcome boost to the economy and landscape of the arts in this country. Virtually every major city in the UK can point with pride to some shiny new example of infrastructure [be it a new or refurbished gallery, or piece of 'landmark' public art] symbolising its embrace of contemporary visual culture. Grant funding available to artists from public sources appears to be at record levels; according to the Arts Council's visual arts strategy document, *Turning Point*, "in the last two years 1,500 artists have benefited from more than £9 million of awards through the Grants for the Arts programme." Despite rising course fees, student

numbers at art schools, including for postgraduate programmes, are on an upward curve. Does this all add up then to a rosy future for Britain's visual artists?

If you scratch below the surface of media hype and government and Arts Council spin you may find grounds for caution. There are, I would argue, at least two potential fault lines in the 'never had it so good' argument: the first is the gulf that is emerging between the Arts Council's rhetoric of support for visual artists and its failure to back it up in policy terms; the second is the theory, developed by the Dutch artist and economist Hans Abbing, Professor of art sociology at the University of Amsterdam, that increasing the amounts of subsidy available to visual artists does not improve the economic situation for most artists – it just spreads the poverty more widely.

To take the Arts Council example first; if you look at the Council's priorities as set out in its 2003 manifesto document *Ambitions for the Arts: 2003 – 2006*, there is a clear commitment to take its obligation to support artists more seriously than had previously been the case. Top of the list of five corporate ambitions for the three-year period is a commitment to "prioritise individual artists". In a section of the manifesto headed *Placing artists at the centre*, we are told: "The artist is the 'life source' of our work. In the past, we have mainly funded institutions. Now we want to give higher priority to the artist."

Fast forward three years to this year's Annual Report and the Arts Council's commitment to the individual artist seems not so much to have waned as to have virtually vanished. Six corporate priorities are now listed; not one refers to support for artists. The most prominent mention of artists in this document comes under the new priority of "the creative economy", where under a section titled *Helping artists to be successful* we are told that: "We develop partnerships that help artists contribute to the creative economy." From 'life source' to a sub-category of 'the creative economy' in just three years; what is going on?

The explanation can, I think, be found in the argument, put forward convincingly in the polemic by The Manifesto Club, that guided by the government's 'instrumentalist' agenda, the Arts Council has over the last decade become ever more concerned with propounding the social and economic benefits of the arts and is consequently less interested in the development of art and artists per se. What The Manifesto Club calls 'artistic autonomy' is being sacrificed at the altar of public utility. In order to demonstrate public utility, the Arts Council is increasingly turning its focus away from the producer of art [the artist] and on to the consumer [the audience]. Hence the emphasis in its current list of priorities on "taking part in the arts", "children and young people" and "vibrant communities".

A warning note, suggesting that in spite of the high profile that they often enjoy in media artists are in danger of being overlooked at a political and policy level, was sounded in *The Right to Art*, a pamphlet produced for VAGA [the Visual Arts and Galleries Association] by the independent think tank Demos in 2004. In a section headed *Invisible artists* the authors, Robert Hewison and John Holden, argue that: "In spite of the economic and social significance of their output, artists lack visibility in

crucial ways... They do not sit easily within the structures and methods that government – both central and local – have adopted to measure what they consider to be important... It is as though visual artists are invisible." If the focus on the economic and social significance of the arts continues to gather momentum, it seems likely that – whilst retaining an honourable place in the official 'golden years' rhetoric – artists will sink deeper into the shadows of policy discourse.

But will this lack of policy focus matter if levels of subsidy for art remain at relatively high levels and if a healthy crop of wannabee artists continues to emerge from our art schools? I would argue that it will; on the basis that without a clear policy focus structural problems facing artists are less likely to be properly recognised and addressed. As an example of a chronic structural problem that ought to be a priority concern for the Arts Council, I would point to the finding, published in its own *Turning Point* strategy document for the visual arts, that "more than 50% of organisations cannot afford to pay artists for exhibitions." This is not a statistic that sits well with the 'golden age' rhetoric.

To assuage its political paymasters the Arts Council is eager to sell the success story of the contribution that artist makes to the 'creative economy', but headline grabbing statistics such as "Frieze visitors in 2005 spent £33 million on art and took more than 25,000 hotel beds in the capital" [*Turning Point*], mask the reality that the majority of visual artists struggle to make even a meagre living from their practice.

This gap between the public rhetoric and the reality on the ground contributes to the continuance of what Hans Abbing, in his 2002 book *Why Are Artists Poor?* calls "the exceptional economy of the arts". The chief characteristics of this economy are, Abbing argues, a large quantity of artists, low average incomes, and a pervasive 'gift sphere' [a large proportion of which comes from government grants and subsidies]. Among the factors contributing to the repeated cycle of poverty that artists face is the fact that despite low incomes an unusually high number of young people want to become artists. This is because art and artists enjoy an exceptionally high status within society and, confused no doubt by official and media rhetoric about the arts being at the heart of a flourishing creative economy, early career artists are unusually ill-informed about their prospects of success.

In *Living on the Edge*, 2005, a follow up article to *Why Are Artists Poor?* Abbing reaches the bleak conclusion that: "due to the mystique of art that society reproduces, and also due to the ample presence of subsidies, many youngsters are lured into the arts. If governments are serious about reducing poverty, they should reduce subsidies; only a reduction leads to fewer poor artists. For the major part, the artistic activity of the large army of artists living on the edge is almost meaningless."

If Abbing's analysis is correct, the combination of 'golden age' rhetoric and the continuance of relatively high levels of public subsidy to artists in the UK, not tied to any properly thought out strategy for developing and regulating the economy for artists, will perpetuate rather than break the cycle of artists' poverty. Gold will continue to flow into the 'creative economy', but not much of it will flow into the pockets of the average artist.

# Championing Artistic Autonomy

## The Manifesto Club

There is a legendary exchange between Michaelangelo and his patron, Pope Julius, over the painting of the Sistine Chapel. Famously secretive and diligent, Michaelangelo lay working on his back alone upon the scaffolding, in great physical discomfort, for twenty months. The Pope was an impatient man and regularly demanded to know when the project would be complete. On one famous occasion, the artist answered, “when it satisfies me in its artistic details”. Irritated, the Pope remarked, “And We want you to satisfy Us in Our desire to see it done quickly”. The threat of being hurled down from the scaffolding was enough to cause the artist to immediately finish up and unveil the masterpiece on the morning of All Saint’s Day, when the Pope came to sing Mass before the whole city.

Artists have never had the luxury of complete freedom. Even those great Renaissance patrons of Rome and Florence, who lavished such praise on their creative servants, made bratty and impatient demands. In each age, artists must wrestle with the tension between their imaginative spirit and more base matters of money, time, and politics. Artistic freedom is always an ideal that lies between what the artist seeks to create at a particular moment in time, and the social, economic and technological means available to them. History shows that artists are often forced to compromise their work according to what the buyer wants, what they can afford, and what they can get away with.

Few artists today have as much to fear as Michaelangelo did from the Vatican. Indeed, the freedom to create art is arguably greater than ever before. Censorship is largely non-existent (except with regard to blasphemy law, of which more later), and state funding (theoretically) gives individual artists and organisations the financial stability to develop risky ideas. The development of public subsidy was supposed to liberate artists, galleries and museums from the commercial and populist tastes of the market, whilst the ‘arms-length’ principle that underpins the establishment of the Arts Council, was intended to guarantee freedom from political interference. Although artists still had to finish their work on time and deliver as they promised, they were also trusted to pursue their creative impulses.

Yet, there has been much debate within the arts sector over the past decade about the lack of autonomy artists have over their

creative vision, and this is something our culture seems wary of celebrating.

The Manifesto Club is an independent organisation campaigning for freedom across numerous areas of public and private life. We have launched a group to campaign for greater autonomy for those working in the arts and cultural sectors. This means challenging growing policy regulations, instrumentalism and market-based thinking, all of which contribute to a culture of restraint. We are individuals working in the arts and cultural sector. Through events, research publications and regular campaign strategies, we want to tackle a number of areas briefly explored here.

### Instrumentalism

Public funding of the arts is at an all-time high, but as the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has repeatedly stated, this subsidy is not ‘something for nothing’. Individual artists, arts groups and cultural organisations are now expected to deliver a range of beneficial effects for society: social inclusion, urban regeneration, improved health and education, community cohesion, crime reduction, youth services and even psychological wellbeing. In 2002, DCMS even called museums and galleries ‘Centres of Social Change’. Undoubtedly the arts can have a positive impact on people’s lives but it is dubious how far these effects can go in transforming society.

Furthermore, the instrumentalism of current policy tends to measure the value of art primarily in these social and economic policy terms. Ideas of artistic quality and value are often secondary, whilst notions of the ‘transformative effects’ of the arts are imposed – with little discussion – as fact. This creates an extra burden on arts professionals to produce ‘research’ that ‘proves’ the beneficial effects of their work in order to receive funding.

There are two serious problems raised by this instrumentalist approach. The first is that the research undertaken about the effects of the arts in dealing with social problems is inconclusive and (very often) unreliable because it is driven by advocacy or funding requirements. Grand claims about the social impact of the arts need to be put into perspective. Whilst they may have many positive knock-on effects, artistic activities and organisations have a very limited effect in dealing with the structural, social and economic problems faced in deprived areas. An arts centre cannot be a substitute for proper economic regeneration, improved public infrastructure and local democratic engagement.

## The struggle for artistic autonomy from physical, political and financial restraints is important precisely when it allows the artist to realise a creative vision

own practice. Artists, gallery professionals and curators have come to express a profound anxiety about state subsidy and the demand to ‘prove’ their value in terms other than artistic ones. Whilst there has been a welcome rise in public funding for the arts and culture, this has also come with strings attached. Artists and arts organisations have to show their work will generate social and economic effects, as well as prove the ‘relevance’ of their work to ‘diverse’ communities. Perhaps more worryingly, people working in the arts often lack the confidence to challenge the tick-box culture and argue for their independence.

Artistic autonomy is often caricatured as a childish rejection of rules, or a license to produce bad, expensive art that no one understands. Freedom can certainly be abused, but why emphasise this, as opposed to its potential to be used towards constructive ends? The struggle for artistic autonomy from physical, political and financial restraints is important precisely when it allows the artist to realise a

Second, the pressure on the arts to be socially ‘useful’ means the artist is less free to determine the content of the work they wish to pursue. The purpose of state subsidy was to empower the artist to explore areas and questions that had no immediate commercial value. This set-up was only possible because art was seen as the bearer of truth, beauty, pleasure and even moral or political conscience, all of which were seen to have long-term value for society. This is no longer the case – art has been repackaged by government as just another agent of social policy.

Whilst many working in the arts are sceptical of current policy, their scepticism is muted by the general acceptance of the idea that a cultural policy that attends to the positive social effects of the arts must be preferable to an elitist approach which ignores the public and places the arts in an institutional ivory tower. This neglects the fact that artists and arts organisations are forced to produce that social engagement from the top down, rather than

to freely explore the ways in which the arts can engage with wider society.

By demanding such engagement, current policy condemns those working in the arts to a passive and bureaucratic involvement with the public, denying them the autonomy to develop spontaneous, organic and sustained explorations of what the arts can do in today’s culture. Perversely, such an approach further deadens the potential for a living exchange between artists and the public, by proscribing and regulating the relationship between the two. Without the freedom to act and think independently, the arts risk becoming a lifeless and bureaucratic exercise in consensus building amongst an equally passive and unquestioning public.

Instrumentalism is not solely driven by external government diktat. The loss of faith in the power of art and the demand to be ‘socially useful’ runs throughout many arts institutions. Even though the vast majority of the public believes in subsidising the arts, there seems to be a crisis of confidence in the sector as a whole. We want to challenge the bureaucracy of tick boxes and evidence-based arts policy, but true autonomy cannot be achieved unless we also have a wider public discussion about the value of art in society.

### Diversity and Inclusion Policies

The Arts Council recently stated that its plan over the next decade was to ‘put people at the heart of the arts’. Such a statement implies that ‘people’ are usually marginalised in the arts sector. It is now regarded as common sense that the arts should be more inclusive and affirm the value of different cultural tastes within the population.

The current government’s decision to make national gallery and museum galleries free – one of its more laudable policies – demonstrates this desire to make art accessible as part of the spirit of a democratic culture.

However, the policy concepts of ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ as they are put into practice are not really about ‘opening up’ the arts, so much as narrowing our horizons. Museums and galleries are told to reconsider their collections in order for them to appeal to ‘non-traditional’ visitors. Theatres are encouraged to present plays that will attract local diverse communities. Individual artists are asked to identify which ‘vulnerable group’ they will be targeting. The assumption behind these demands is that the public has very limited tastes and cannot be expected to transcend the familiar. Whilst there is a serious problem in the provision of high quality arts education in state schools (for instance, with regards to skilled teaching of visual culture) ‘inclusion’ policies rationalise the deficiencies in our education system by saying that all cultures are equal and judgements are inherently ‘elitist’. New legislation that criminalises ‘incitement to religious hatred’ adds to an ever-growing anxiety that art should not cause offence to vulnerable groups or individuals. The power of art to shock, surprise and disturb is today increasingly stifled.

Diversity and inclusion policies have also further politicised the running of arts organisations. Managers are told to support ethnic minority artists because of their cultural background, rather than the rigour of the individual artists practice. In the one sector where people are supposed to be unpredictable and challenging, people are constantly pre-judged according to their ethnicity. The UK is a favoured destination for artists from around the world, but when they arrive they discover very quickly that the public funding system prefers to accommodate them on the basis of their ethnicity, as ‘diverse’ artists. They are expected to represent a particular community’s interests (and reinforce a sense of identity), based on the sole qualification of their skin colour or place of origin. This is equally true for UK born artists from ethnic minority backgrounds.

We champion a universalist approach to the arts, where people are encouraged to transcend the familiar and aspire to understand the complex. The public value of art cannot be determined by the number of people who consume it, or the kinds of ‘labels’ attached to it. Artists should be free to create work that means something to them, not to comply with an institutional quota. We need to challenge the low expectations set out in current policy and free the artist and audience from this pigeon-holing.

### Art Schools

Art schools are today in trouble. At a time when more students than ever are enrolling on

Fine Art courses, there is a tangible sense of confusion about the purpose and aspirations of training to be an artist.

At first glance, these difficulties reflect the consumerist transformation of higher education in general. Tutors now find that they have too much paperwork – and too little time to develop a proper engagement with students. However, problems of organisation and resources don’t fully explain the tangible sense of disorientation and drift in art schools today. Rather, these problems express the despirited, professionalised, risk-averse and bureaucratic culture in wider society that has encroached on the ambitious, speculative, experimental and progressive spirit that once informed the best artistic practice and teaching.

Increasingly, for example, students are encouraged to think as entrepreneurs, or to see art-making as a career like any other. Art students spend much of their time proving themselves through modules on ‘professional development’ or on student placements in the community. They no longer sense the purpose or value of risk-taking and experimentation. It is a frequent complaint of teachers that students are becoming increasingly cautious and conservative in their attitude towards the education they receive, being ever more preoccupied with ‘making the grade’. Students-as-consumers are also sceptical and oversensitive to robust criticism of their work.

## True autonomy cannot be achieved unless we also have a wider public discussion about the value of art in society.

More broadly, we have an educational culture that sees knowledge and learning as primarily vocational and utilitarian. Society is increasingly risk-averse and pessimistic about the capacity of humans to develop new ideas that take us beyond the familiar.

There is no textbook for the ideal artist, but we want to champion an art school training that is focused on the development of truly inquiring, independent subjects and not just the assimilation and reproduction of pre-existing disciplines. The creative edge is led by those who have the confidence and insight to push it beyond its conventional languages, forms and attitudes. We want to act as a rallying point for art students, tutors and others who are concerned about these problems, and to open a debate about what a genuinely free art school might look like.

### Where next?

The arts sector has a long history of political agitation. Today the battleground must surely be in our own backyard. The teaching, funding, and regulation of the arts are informed by a culture of low expectations and uncertainty about their value. This has led to a climate of distrust, where artists and organisations are subject to ever-greater restraint. Whilst the sector undoubtedly brims with creative energy, intrusive policies and a risk-averse culture have also had a deadening effect. Artists are increasingly bound to a range of social policy targets, economic imperatives and expectations which limit their creative freedom.

For those who are passionate about the arts and believe they have a public value, a first step is to come together publicly and challenge the more immediate restrictions that limit autonomy. This must also go hand-in-hand with an open debate about the value of arts practice and institutions. Arguing for autonomy for artists and their organisations is not simply a defence of the creative freedom of artists. It also tells us something about how we value our ability to participate in and create a living culture, one in which we are free to question, argue, agree and disagree over what makes our society worth being part of. Many individuals in the arts sector live in fear of losing their funding if they upset the apple-cart.

Unless we make our voices heard, we will always live under threat of being hurled from the scaffolding.



The 343

He got on the 343 from London Bridge to New Cross, someone should have told him to take the 21 if he ever wanted to see his destination. The convoluted tour through southeast London was an education in itself. He experienced a London unique to some, passing sights that told of a city still giving all it had to its people. Roads full of lives laid themselves bare before the upper deck, visible through the scored panes doubling as windows. There is something deliberate in the transformation of graffiti from characters daubed in bright colours to the frantic scratchings now qualifying as tagging. However the truth to materials in scratching was endearing, and one can only admire the determination displayed in continuing the battle leaving a mark for posterity has become. Identity expression in the city has always been a public affair. The powerful plaster their intentions over everything in sight, seeking to render the entire public space of display private, strategically denying the individual's need to make their presence felt.

The bus wound through aspirations, parts of the city where dreams seemed sharpest. These were sites of entry, reasons for inhabitation and presence extended far beyond the simple need to watch another day drift by. Some of their dreams had been dulled in the confrontation with abrasive realities, yet blunt dreamers still manage to shine when set beside those bereft of the memory of possibility.

He learnt there were still prefabricated bungalows in London. The 343 eased past their odd-shaped plots, celebrating a time when land in the southeast was easy to give. Finally getting to New Cross, the 343 had generously given its gift, a reminder that some time can only be spent sitting looking out of windows



Cranes

Cranes pirouette against the city sky, they must make up the largest number of dancers in perpetual motion. They look far too fragile to carry the load they are burdened with. Such strange beasts, they arrive unannounced, burst into being, and arrogantly stand proud above all around them. Like sea-buoys, they warn of impending inevitable hazards hidden away from immediate sight, while providing a safe navigable route and resting place for the mind. The lost and exhausted found solace in the mechanical heavenly performers; deeming the towers' wiry strength and freedom as theirs.

Stopping to watch their graceful movements she began to understand how the 'sky hooks' kept her afloat, allaying that sinking feeling. She recognised the cranes' constant complicated dance of courtship, tower to tower, foils for the conquering lovers hidden away in offices, denying they sought the other's attention.

She was obsessed with cranes, filmed their movement, drew them, took photographs, infected others with her fascination to the extent that all instinctively gathered cranes for her. It was comforting to know the city bore her own Phoenix, and it would take her with it through each rebirth ('The builders were in' and appeared determined to keep the pyre alive). Reaching a level of comfort with her environment's constant demise, the sentinels of destruction deserved an archive in her opinion, something to balance the narrative of change.

And so her collection grew, dominated her home, spilled out into the street and kept on growing.



Limousines

He wondered why people did not hire real limousines for their own pleasure, instead of waiting for the cusp of eternal internment to get their act together enough to hire carriages to slowly wheel down the road. The delight and dread of all who see the entourage should be enjoyed presently by the paying principal, he argued. That most people never have an adoring public was another reason to get the show rolling early. He thought none deserved to live with never knowing the feeling of spotlight attention.

Enjoying a captivated audience was being left too late, especially in the city where neighbours remain strangers for a lifetime. Something needed to be done to address this denial of opportunity available to everyone. It seemed such a waste; funeral parlours leave gleaming cars in showrooms unused. The shining display promised grandeur to salivate over, but not put to use. All that pomp and ceremony, formal dress and poise, was denied the deserving for fear of contamination. As if death was a contagion. Yet mourners must take some pleasure in their proximity to confined remains; temporary elevation, all the respect accorded the corpse eased onto their shoulders.

But what a scene it would be if the object of attention could reach their choice destination, slide out the back of their gleaming chariot, tip the avant-garde who had walked miles before the caravan, and have a great night out.



Believing Scholar

He sat on the train, trying to occupy as much space to stop an intruding passenger from taking the adjoining seat. Familiar system, spread out as much as possible: a bag, a jacket, papers strewn across two seats, that kind of thing.

She simply asked him if the seat was free, and a furious cleaning up operation was set in motion. She waited as he cleaned, and on reaching her standard of acceptance, she sat.

Work was impossible now, he stared out of the window and listened to I Got A Story To Tell. At least it was funny. Soon forgiving the interloper, he could not help but smile at the thought of the B.I.G. rapper being caught with his pants down.

She removed a small Bible from her bag and started reading. Then he noticed the yellow highlighter and the notepad. She read the notepad then lit line after line in the book. Colours already adorned pages: bright pink; graphite; black pen, verdant green. The edges of the pages were proudly dark with dirt. It would have been called grimy if they had not been indelible symbols of her love affair with the possible. She presented the Bible like a badge of honour, it declared her membership. Blue highlighter peeked out from other pages, a counterpoint to the yellow hopes he was witnessing being formed.

A studied search for personality in city anonymity



## Suitcase

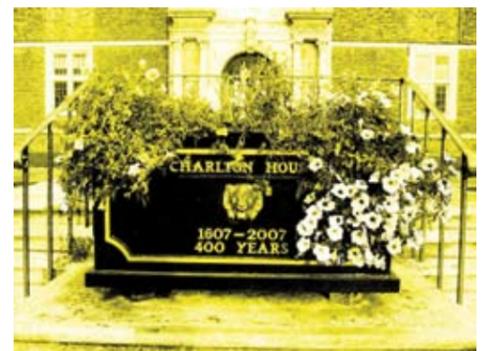
It was late at Liverpool Street Station. Trains to Whitechapel were being promised by the information screen at great intervals. One had just departed, and now all it had to offer was an alternative circular trip. Not exactly enticing when home was the intention. He sat.

It was the scraping that drew his attention, she seemed oblivious to sound as she marched on. Her suitcase had flipped over and the wheels were uselessly facing the station ceiling. She was dressed for work, dark grey pinstripe suit, skirt hem just above her knees, and very high heels. She had that 'end of day' look about her. Gravity had taken its toll, rounded shoulders and slouch told a lot. Not quite surrender, but her confrontations with the day had not been scar-free.

It was his opinion that suitcases with small wheels were impractical, trolleys being a much better solution. Thought had gone into the trolley; decent sized wheels, handles that suit most heights, and if they flip over it would be hard to miss. Even if they were not the most elegant of prostheses, they excelled.

It was air-stewardesses that premiered the contraption from his childhood memories, and consequently should be the only ones allowed to pull such cases behind them. With their uniforms and pillbox hats, the trailing appendages simply become another piece of official equipment. Their heels on hard polished floors delivering the staccato efficiency the wheeled unit demanded.

It was with relief that he noticed the suited woman had righted her cargo. She impatiently towed it along the platform, paused, then yanked it up the three steps into disappearance.



## Night Journey

He confidently walked the midnight streets. He had always felt it was his city, so he accepted that everything surveyed belonged to him. He knew he did not own this city as he owned property, but he owned it all the same. Impossible for him to live in the city any other way, forfeiting his sense of ownership would be it for him, he would lose his assured sense of identity. He would have to abandon this resting place he had come to accept as home.

There was delightfully far too much to absorb, sensory overload delivered his excitement within the city. Assuming he thoroughly knew a place, he need only look up beyond the first floor, and patiently waiting would be something new to discover.

If he did become mayor of the city, he would get a helicopter, hover over every inch of the city and take it all in. Acquire a true sense of place. He would strive to see it all, understand what made the city function. Rooftops could only tell so much, but it would be a beginning.



## The back seats

I can't imagine going out with a thin fit man. Why?  
It's all those muscles.  
I know what you mean; they'd make me feel inadequate.  
A man needs some stomach on him, some flab, some extra meat.  
And they are more easy-going, they never expect you to go on a diet or something stupid like that. I can be myself, it is not as if I am thin or anything.  
I know; can you imagine walking down the road with one? People would stare. Simply wouldn't look right; Jack Sprat and all that.  
Do you know what else I cannot stand?  
What?  
Short men.  
They're not too bad.  
No, there is something about them I cannot accept.

What do you think?  
I'm just listening.  
You are a man, and you're just sitting there listening to us ramble on.  
What am I supposed to say, if you do not like fit or short men there is nothing I can do.  
God, that is lame, I at least expect an opinion of some sort.  
I suppose I wonder what you think of me.  
You're OK; you're a mate, that's different.

Oh, that's my new lover, he only rings when he wants something.  
At least this one rings, not like the last one.  
I know, but he was nineteen and gorgeous. Felt like being at college again.  
But you are not, you've been working for years, and it shows.  
Thanks.

We've arrived, it's your turn to get the drinks in. I know, I know.



## Nigerian Sands

He went walking through Nigeria, well not the whole country, just Dalston. He knew many nations populated Dalston and understood the rules of occupation. One only had to note the consistent police presence at Dalston-Kingsland train station at rush hour to realise the place was considered a separate land. The proximate market was a riot of sounds, unlike the harsh silence of supermarkets. Isolating languages was a pleasing adventure, and the loudspeakers claiming divine interference reinforced the combination of religion and money being the proffered salvation. To live in Dalston is to have faith, it represented transformation, transplantation, and cultural transubstantiation. But Dalston, Nigeria was an uncomfortable contradiction. The neighbourhood had been called this by so many people he knew, the monicker had eventually stuck in his mind.

They, his acquaintances, were considering part of London, Nigeria, or was it the other way around? He had to question the familiarising gesture for a while. The act of giving the place parentage, rather than birth, was not lost on him. Doting parents have a knack of fading, giving all they have to children they love. He considered Nigeria doing this to Dalston, and he smiled. He knew the impact would be different if Dalston had been renamed Ajegunle, United Kingdom. Now that would have been a radical renaming, the familiar violent act of erasure and possession.

Arriving at his destination, he was shown paint swatches. Nigeria Sands, the given name of a Dulux paint mix. Unsurprisingly they were tones of brown, (what else would it be but a brown? Brown land, brown people, brown everywhere, the many possibilities of brown). Yet there it was, Nigeria Sands, five versions of Nigeria Sands for the discerning homesick interior decorator in Dalston.



## Festival of freeloaders

It is always interesting to observe guests from a vantage point at a gallery exhibition private view. One can but wonder why the guests were there, and how many were invited bona fide guests? It would appear all they were there to do was eat and drink as much as possible. The work can go hang itself (somewhere else) for all they cared. The 'things', 'art', 'exhibition' in the space was good conversation fodder, little else. That singular odd character who gives more than a perfunctory survey of the space (never getting down to the business of being a liberty-taking guest) is best discounted.

Who and what is a guest in this context? Defining a guest as one who spends some time at another's home in some social activity, raises questions of 'home', and how long a social activity lasts. One is forced to inquire: when do guests spend so much time in the 'home' that long-expired invitations transform into self-justifying licences? Calling a co-inhabitant a guest tells only part of a complicated story, conveniently abridged to disguise realisms.

Looking around the gallery, one is struck by the numerous guests deriving pleasure of the host's invitation. And yet what is the preview without people mingling and enlivening the work on display?

So the festival continues, 'freeloading' flourishes, and the guests sacrifice their lives.

1/08/06 – Artquest contact me with an invitation to write something about the future to celebrate their 5th birthday. My future? The future of art, of mankind, of the planet? I go to my mediation class, the emphasis of which is on being in the moment and in one's body. I am increasingly interested in the place of embodied experience in artistic practice and in ways of valuing the kinds of understanding to which it gives rise – especially in a climate in which questions of instrumental worth dominate cultural policy. Perhaps this preoccupation with predictability, with strategy, audit and outcome, is connected at root to a desire to make things knowable and thus control them.

3/08/06 – I arrange to meet with Alice Angus and talk with her about wilderness spaces, along with kayaking, of which she is an enthusiast. I start reading a book on Muybridge by Rebecca Solnit in which she makes a connection between the advent of rail travel (the impact of which, she argues, was to rupture a connection between the body and the landscape over which it passed), and the growth in popularity of photographic images (that other great technological innovation of the period) of the American wilderness.<sup>1</sup>

RL  
I have a long-term fascination with coasts as transitional spaces, between nature and culture, as well as in a physical sense. I spent some time looking into wreck charts and what struck me most was the fact that the majority happen close to the shore – at the point closest to home.

AA  
Kayaking along the coast you are in a zone in which neither sea charts or land maps give the complete picture – not quite land and not deep sea; its like being 'under the radar' in a fluid mutable space.

Writing about the attempt by early colonisers to map the coast of Australia from the sea, Paul Carter discusses the way in which a range of factors, the movement of the water, light reflecting from its surface and tidal changes, made conventional surveying equipment ineffective necessitating instead that it be drawn by eye. For me his observations are interesting because not only do they foreground the corporeal experience of seeing, but also what he calls '...the refractory nature of the phenomenal world...'<sup>2</sup> Recently I have become interested in under-sea environments; significantly, bathymetric surveying is done with sonar and only subsequently modelled visually, using computers. You could say that such environments resist the attempt to 'fix' them with lens-based optical technologies. Another aspect of this that interests me is that much of the seabed remains unnamed.

As do parts of the land; like Ivvavik National Park in Canada's North West Arctic (where I was part of a residency in 2005) where few of the mountains are named on maps.<sup>3</sup> For someone from the UK, where virtually every feature of the landscape is named, it really heightens the sense of being in a space that is boundless.

4/08/06 – I cycle in the heat to Hornsey Road Baths where my friend Mike, an architect, who knows about my interest in swimming pools, is working on the redevelopment of the site.

Demolition has already started; a disconsolate group of men are dismantling the interior. Entering the space at my own risk, I watch as the railings around the main pool fall

grudgingly to blowtorches and sledgehammers. The arbitrary character of this process disturbs me – no crowd-pleasing, ground-leveling finale this, but instead the mutual indignity of racking, dogmatic blows. Enjoying the unexpected distraction, one of the men offers me his hard hat and tells me he used to swim here as a child.

Hornsey Road Baths, erected in 1892 by the Parish of St. Mary's, Islington, London, Men's pool 32 by 100 feet with 7 dressing rooms, Women's pool measuring 25 by 75 feet. 108 private tub and shower baths, lavatories and a public Laundry with accommodation for 40 washers.

This visit is especially strange for me; over a decade ago I spent part of one summer in this shuttered space, installing an artwork for Edge 92. Until today I had failed to realise that our incursion into the building was as close as anybody came to marking its centenary. It was hard, dirty and foolhardy work.

What comes back to me now is the experience of fumbling fearfully through the narrow maintenance passageways that ran under the main pool, a dark inverted universe, where inside and outside, positive and negative space no longer conformed to their usual relations. Returning to the entrance, however, I find it blocked. Denied the underworld, I make for the heavens.

Persons in bathing attire are not permitted to enter the spectator's gallery. Up through the building, which peels and splits like an overripe fruit, to the roof space. The remnants of plastic sheeting that we rolled gingerly over the glass to create a blackout are still in evidence, collapsing fourteen years in an instance. Tiptoeing along slender gantries, thick with shit (which make it impossible to know what is solid and what, if I put my weight on it, will fall effortlessly away), I gaze cautiously down, through the broken fanlight, to the pool metres below, where the ant men continue to labour. A pigeon clatters noisily past and, sensing that like Icarus my wings may be about to melt, I crawl carefully back, stepping briefly out into the blinding sunlight of the surrounding roof.

Paddling from the sea into a bay full of people, coming from the fluctuating ocean into a more restrained, domestic space is such a dramatic change; one compounded by the contrast between the movement of the sea and stillness of the land. Yet each is alive in a different way. One of the things that attracts me to paddling is that shift in your relationship with land and water. Kayaking on London's waterways provides a physical connection to nature which then becomes mixed with the experience of looking back into an urban environment.

Growing up by the sea in North Devon I remember occasionally going out on a boat and looking back on the land and seeing how different everything looked. Your understanding of where you were is quite substantially changed.

For me the time it takes to get 'there' plays a part in that. Going to Ivvavik from London took several days. As part of a body of work about presence, perceptions of place and ecologies, I had wanted to make connections between this seemingly boundless space and the situated place of London. Before I set out I thought I would make a series of live web casts, broadcasting stories about the place. But after a while I realised I was reflecting more on where I had come from and that the bigger connections were borne from everyday details. One of these was between the twenty-

four hour sunlight and the twenty-four hour city (which made me realise the only place I had ever been where everyone goes to sleep at night is suburbia). My ideas about London and Ivvavik were upturned because I was able to look back.

In the little bit of diving training I've done one of the extraordinary things was that, because the water was quite murky, I could no longer tell if I was upside down – all my capacity for orientation was lost – which was very unsettling.

It's so much to do with a language of how to orient your body. When you are diving, as far as I understand – you have to learn a new language of currents and temperature. It makes me think of dancer Kits Dubois' Gravity Zero work about the body and gravity.<sup>4</sup>

Well, your centre of buoyancy and your centre of gravity are in two different places so at that very basic level your fulcrum, if you like, shifts within your body.

This is another thing that draws me to kayaking – articulating your body through water and air, from one physicality to another and through differing relationships to gravity and the horizon.

At the back, the smaller 'women's pool' offers up a scene of tranquil excess. This is a place that has seen a great deal. Balancing a fear of sinking into their rancid depths against the impetus of curiosity, I clamber over piles of abandoned clothes and enter the bathhouse with its rows of busted, coffin-like tubs. 'Please note that the time allowed for a bath or shower is 30 minutes – thank you'.

Returning, I climb up and along the top diving board, remembering the anxious feel, as a child, of rope matting beneath my feet. Roger Deacon notes the demise of diving boards, victims of restrictions that dictate that the depth of most pools is no longer considered sufficient for them to be regarded as safe.<sup>5</sup>



The tiled void of the pool gapes back at me; empty save for some thick, dark liquid that gathers, like mercury, at one end. Feeling the plank flex beneath me, I lose my nerve and shuffle back down the ladder to solid ground.

Several years ago I made a work for which my interest in mutability was the starting point, in which I turned myself digitally into a swarm. Looking back on it though, what was important about it was the loss of any horizon – especially following on from the work I had been doing which was very situated in social and cultural constructions of place.

I remember being in the sea off a Greek island in deep clear water where it was possible see the bottom. I got vertigo; it felt like pitching off the edge of the world, into the abyss. I've also had vertigo from swimming in very dark deep water and not knowing where the bottom is.

When she swam Loch Ness, which is 24 miles long and 700 metres deep, Australian marathon swimmer Tammy van Wisse said she was 'in a constant state of panic.'<sup>6</sup> Quite apart from the monster! The water is dark because of the peat and the high sides of the hills create long shadows, so that while the sun might be shining behind them, the loch is dark. On a foggy day when the loch is still it reflects the mist, blurring the boundary between air and water, so that being in a small boat is like flying. It is a pleasantly unstable sensation. At other times they reflect the sky like a mirror and you feel as though you are hanging in the air.

I once created a piece of video of a woman swimming 'on the spot', against an artificially generated current, in an exercise pool. I got completely fixated with the idea of being in constant motion, but at the same time held in suspension – of journeying endlessly without any point of arrival or departure and the extent to which this gives rise to a sense of the 'infinite' or 'limitless.' As the camera tracks back however, you see that she is completely contained in a small coffin-like space. That reminds me of what you were saying about needing to go back to the side of the pool when you were learning to kayak and of your description of experiencing vertigo. Physically, emotionally and intellectually it's so destabilising that you immediately want to right yourself – to find a point of reference – to go back to a more usual understanding of things. I guess its only possible to temporarily suspend the need to negotiate things by differentiating between them – here and there, past and future.

Meeting Mike at the front we pass through the laundry, straining in the darkness to see what he thinks are the artisan wells that originally fed the complex, reaching directly down to the water table far below. No sign of the 40 washers.

19/08/06 I read in the Guardian that Roger Deakin, lover of sheds and wild swimmer, has died – I hope he lies in some watery place.

<sup>1</sup> Solnit Rebecca Motion Studies: Time, Space and Eadward Muybridge (London: Bloomsbury 2004)

<sup>2</sup> Carter, Paul, 'Dark with Excess of Bright; Mapping the Coastlines of Knowledge' in Cosgrove, Denis (ed), Mappings (London: Reaktion, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> <http://landscapes-in-dialogue.org.uk/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.artscatalyst.org/projects/space/SPACEkitsou.html>

<sup>5</sup> Deakin Roger Waterlog: A Swimmer's Journey Through Britain (London: Chatto and Windus 1999)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.tammyvanwisse.com/loch\\_ness.htm](http://www.tammyvanwisse.com/loch_ness.htm)



# Futurelog

Rona Lee

## A slightly modified 12 x 12 interview game:

# 4 MOMENTS FROM 12 INTERVIEWS WITH 4 GROUPS OVER 12 HOURS

CCRED / The alt.SPACE Group

### 1. In conversation with Carl Lind

[Signal, Malmö:  
www.signal-galleri.org]  
August 26, 2006  
11.00 am (GMT)



**CCRED:** To what extent do you feel that your practice depends on institutional definitions of success and failure, and to what extent do you feel you can set those parameters yourself?

**Carl:** I think we can only look at success and failure from within the history of a project, looking back at what you've done, what it leads to, what it changed, what it made possible. To me, this is really the only way these terms can be used productively, when looking back at a practice, considering whether or not a project has made something possible, made a practice expand.

**CCRED:** Is there a link between... capitalist cultures of individualism and competition, notions of property – the right to property – the selling off of what was once nationalised industries and housing, etc., the operative notion of freedom that seems to reside at the core of the wars we are currently facing – and the different paradigms and parameters of contemporary cultural/artistic production (which are sometimes thought of as outside of those contexts), or do you see them as distinct?

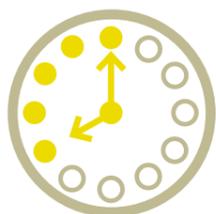
**Carl:** I think there is a link, in a sense, or there should be... I mean, if you don't acknowledge the fact that these two fields are linked, that cultural production is linked to wider social and political structures, if you ignore this link, you end up with a kind recycling of art for art's sake. So yes, I think that as artists, we should be working with, confronting, these relations, and consider the fact that whatever we do, it will have effects within a wider context. There is definitely a link here, and it needs to be acknowledged.

**CCRED:** Why collaborate? What does collaboration mean to you? In what ways is it important to your practice?

**Carl:** Collaboration is important to me. I feel we need to create networks, united fronts, new starting points, which means that we also need to dismantle the idea of the cultural producer being the individual genius and origin of the work and its meaning. I mean, the notion of an isolated idea has little relevance to me. Different inputs are great, but they need to be worked on from within a group, which will inevitably transform them, generate new options, developments and directions. If they are not worked with in this sense, what you end up with is the equivalent of a traditional group show. A much better model, to me, would be to put all ideas, all work, in one big pile, mash it all up and see what comes out of it. Of course, I'm talking in metaphors right now, but this is how I'd like to think of collaboration.

### 2. In conversation with Benno Gammerl

[UNWETTER, Berlin:  
www.un-wetter.net]  
August 26, 2006  
8.00 am (GMT)



**CCRED:** Could you talk briefly about a project you think of as a success and briefly about problems or even failures you've experienced within your work?

**Benno:** As UNWETTER, we took part in the Liverpool Biennial doing this Discursive Camping project. It was really quite interesting, fairly concentrated. We had certain topics and we actually managed to get a bunch of different people together to play around with ideas. Sometimes this is precisely the problem – to get people to engage and interact, it is difficult to get beyond that initial point of hesitation. I suppose this could be thought of as a possible form of failure.

**CCRED:** To what extent do you feel that dominant cultural institutions determine your practice and to what extent do you feel that you, in your practice, can intervene into the institutions of dominant culture?

**Benno:** This sort of dependency problem seems fairly straight-forward to me. On one hand, you are of course financially dependent on institutions, funding bodies, etc. but on the other hand, outside of that dependency, it seems to me you can determine the parameters of success and failure of a project or a collaboration yourself. So I suppose, pragmatically speaking, any practice needs to situate itself somewhere between the two.

The question of how you intervene into these institutional structures is a difficult one. I think to some extent we can successfully intervene and challenge the assertions and structures of hegemonic culture. I mean, we try anyway. For example, we try to make possible non-conventional forms of interchange and exchange, forms of interaction that do not normally take place within the artworld and that often involve links between artists and non-artist groups and communities. This seems to me to constitute a kind of intervention into these institutional structures, both as a form of content and on a really practical level, like insisting that people are let in for free when they come to attend our events.

**CCRED:** What does collaboration mean to you? Why are you interested in collaboration as a form of practice?

**Benno:** What does collaboration mean to me? It's a way of doing art... A mode of production that moves away from notions of the origin of the artwork, original production... For me, it's productive on many different levels. I couldn't really do it in any other way.

When I collaborate I'm on vacation from myself!

On the 25th and 26th of August 2006, we organised an interview game based on the number 12 and around issues to do with non or anti-institutional self-organised collaborative structures. 12 contributors – friends and allies, groups and collectives we know and/or have worked with – were to answer 12 questions in 12 minutes. The 12 interviews were to take place over a period of 12 consecutive hours.

This text comprises a series of extracts – 4 moments from the interview game (with links to relevant websites). We hope you will find it as interesting as we did.

### 3. In conversation with Scott Rigby

[Basekamp,  
Philadelphia:  
www.basekamp.com]  
August 25, 2006  
11.00 pm (GMT)



**CCRED:** Do you feel that it is problematic that dominant cultural institutions take it upon themselves to offer a critique of precisely the kind of dominant culture they represent?

**Scott:** I would say that when a certain strategy gets co-opted the strategy itself is threatened. A quick example would be Nicholas Bourriaud's co-opting of so-called relational work. It sort of summarizes all kinds of participatory work and groups it under this umbrella that sometimes seems to damage the strategies themselves. Not as much as I feared it would, perhaps. Now that some time has passed it seems less significant, but during that period it was virtually impossible to talk of any participatory, social strategy without talking about Nicholas Bourriaud, this notion of relational aesthetics and the handful of practices that he makes use of in his work.

**CCRED:** Do you feel there is a direct link between cultural production and wider political contexts and how do you feel this relates to your practice?

**Scott:** Practitioners within the arts hold a somewhat special place as cultural producers within a social structure. In a sense, it is a position very similar to athletes. I'll give you an example: At one point, the US government sponsored an exhibition highlighting Abstract-Expressionist painting. The exhibition toured the globe – Europe, the USSR, etc. – and basically what was meant to be a display, with these abstract pieces, was a narrative around US dominance: 'we're powerful', 'we're big' – a lot of bravado... And continually, in this way, artists are used to express a cultural and political context, say freedom of speech, much in the same way as athletes are used, say, to represent freedom to compete through hard work, etc. So yes, I do think there is a really strong connection between what this country is supposed to stand for and its cultural production.

As for the second part of the question, sometimes I think we're critical of a kind of market economy of human creativity. I mean, the global art market is a huge machine, a multi-billion dollar industry, but it is nothing in comparison to other markets. It does however supposedly represent a kind of criticality, the upper echelons of symbolic play. It has symbolic value in this sense. And so I think when artists address something in the art field, we are in fact addressing a symbolic order that in different ways resonates and links to a wider political context.

**CCRED:** What does collaboration mean to you? Why collaborate?

**Scott:** For me, what collaboration is not, is a mandate. What it is not, is to say that the best way to live is to always live and work in a group. I think collaboration is to assert that competition is not the only or even the best way of progressing or moving ahead.

Even in societies where individual freedom is very high, we are still very dependent on one another, there is overlap, and we already live in groups. We can only really define individuality through the groups that we're part of – from the family to society at large – and in particular perhaps through the most dominant form of group of this period – the corporation. I really think we need to critically look at and examine these forms of human organisation, including how artists live and organise themselves collaboratively, without making the assertion that collaboration, in and of itself, is good.

### 4. In conversation with Lee Simmons

[London: www.  
leesimmons.org]  
August 26, 2006  
2:00 am (GMT)



**CCRED:** Do you think it is troublesome that dominant cultural institutions tend to capture and make use of more self-organized strategies and forms of criticality? Do you feel that it is problematic that dominant cultural institutions take it upon themselves to offer a critique of precisely the kind of dominant culture they represent?

**Lee:** I don't know... How can you capture a self-organised group that doesn't want to be captured? It seems there are ways out of it. Take any kind of critical strategy or practice – it's not going to function in same way in a museum or gallery as within the context of self-organisation.

For me personally, it's also a question of reaching out to people. Institutions such as museums and galleries can be used to reach a larger amount of people, make a practice more accessible. It is not necessarily a question of capture, and it seems it does involve some degree of choice. Perhaps it is a question of coming up with viable strategies...

**CCRED:** To what extent do you feel that dominant cultural institutions determine your practice and to what extent do you feel that you, in your practice, can intervene into the institutions of dominant culture?

**Lee:** In terms of my work, I think it does perhaps provide a challenge to dominant cultural institutions, but only in the sense that it doesn't really need them to function. The fact that we can just go off and do art work in public places, that we don't necessarily need institutional support, seems to be a critical position in itself.

**CCRED:** What is it about collaboration that interests you?

**Lee:** Collaboration? I think it can strengthen your sense of identity, what knowledge and qualities you have, what you bring to the table. But it depends on the people you're working with, and the project... The Walk-Talk-Eat-TalkSomeMore project (at www.ccred.org), for instance, has not been claustrophobic. It doesn't seem to involve any real sense of pressure. But then it is an extremely open project without any real output. You really just bring what you have and there is nothing you're meant to achieve. It's just quite open and chilled, easy communication between people. This sort of openness makes it easier, I think.

“...My brain hurt like a warehouse  
It had no room to spare  
I had to cram so many things  
To store everything in there...”  
5 Years. David Bowie.

## More about

## ARTQUEST

The new Artquest website still allows our users to find and access all our existing advice, information and listings. However the web, and the way people use and interact with it, has changed immeasurably in 5 years. Users and visitors are now less content to simply receive and absorb information in a passive way, and recent technological shifts make these methods over simplistic and outdated. Add to this the emergence of blogs, wikis and social networking websites, increasingly exploited by artists to showcase, network and communicate with other like-minded artists and the online ‘public’ – the so-called ‘Audience of One’ – and you get a complex and constantly evolving digital landscape. The new Artquest website will increasingly reflect these shifts.

## ARTRÔUTE

In an international context, Artroute provides in-depth, country-specific guides to practice and opportunities, supplemented by on-the-ground narrative from practitioners. Artroute France, launched in October 2005, is the first of many of these guides. We are developing arrangements with other countries to create reciprocal guides for artists seeking opportunities and collaborations in London, helping build international communities of peer support.

## ARTELIER

In development for 2007/2008, Artelier is a new international initiative. A user-driven studio exchange website, visitors to Artelier will be able to create free online profiles giving written details, plans and photographs of their accommodation and studio space. Other users with profiles can then look for artists to swap with; searching by language, country, city, technical facilities, size of accommodation and/or length of desired exchange. Users will then be able to message each other via the site, maintaining confidentiality and choosing for themselves when to swap contact details.

The Artquest ‘5 Year’ publication – including an extended version of the ‘alt.SPACE Group’ conversation game – can also be downloaded via <http://www.artquest.org.uk/five> from 14th December 2006.



**Paul Glinkowski** is a writer and researcher specialising in the contemporary visual arts.

He was a researcher and programme-maker at BBC Television before joining the Visual Arts Department at Arts Council England (ACE) in 1996, where the main focus of his work was support for the professional development of visual artists. In 2003, he wrote the only publication to be published to date on open studios: *Open Studios*, a gem worth polishing. Other publications include *A BBC Introduction to Modern and Contemporary Art and Date with an Artist*, both published by the BBC.

Paul left Arts Council in January 2004 to work as a freelance arts writer and consultant for organisations such as ACE and a-n, The Artists’ Information Company. In 2005 he was appointed Rootstein Hopkins Research Fellow at Wimbledon College of Art.

**The Manifesto Club** was initiated with the aim of challenging cultural trends that restrain and stifle people’s aspirations and initiative. Our aim was to bring together people whose ideas don’t necessarily fit into the politics of left and right, but who share a belief in the potential for developing human beings’ creativity and knowledge.

Manifesto Club hubs are groups of individuals who are concerned about stifling and bureaucratising trends in a particular area – in this instance the arts – and want to start the debate for a more free-spirited alternative.

This group defends artistic autonomy in all its forms. We criticise and oppose pressure on artists to work towards the targets of politicians. We also seek to encourage an experimental artistic culture, which is not afraid to make mistakes in the search for truthful forms of expression.

<http://www.manifestoclub.com/hubs/artistic-autonomy>

**Raimi Gbadamosi** is an artist, writer and curator. He received his Doctorate in Fine Art from the Slade School of Fine Art, where he is currently a Research Fellow. His Doctoral thesis, ‘The use of Black People in British Advertising, or A Man Should Be Judged By the Colour Of His Shirt’ explored British racial politics and cultural differences.

He is a member of the interdisciplinary research group ‘AfroEuropeans,’ University of Leon, Spain, and the ‘Black Body’ group, Goldsmiths College, London.

Solo exhibitions include ‘Child’s Play’, London, (2006). ‘SHRINE,’ Market Gallery, Glasgow (2005). ‘600/60/6/6’, London (2005). ‘I am a Man and an Artist’, Leon, Spain (2003). ‘©R. Gbadamosi 1995’, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (2000).

Raimi has written essays for publications including *Third Text*, *Spiked Online* and *Arts Professional*.

The Republic negotiates the meeting of language and social constructions.  
<http://www.the-republic.net>

**Rona Lee’s** work is research based, incorporating a range of different media, including photography, video, sculpture and performance, alongside various kinds of intervention and participation. Work in progress includes *The Submersion Series*, a cluster of projects which operate across the fields of art, architecture, geography and oceanography.

She has shown work extensively in Britain at, amongst others, Beaconsfield, The Ikon Gallery, Tate Modern, Firstsite and Newlyn Art Gallery and abroad at Henie Onstad Museum, Oslo, San Francisco, Quebec City and The Irish Museum of Modern Art.

In Summer 2007 she will be participating in an international symposium *Imaginary Places*

at Banff Arts Centre, Canada. She grew up in a coastal town they forgot to close down.

**Alice Angus** is an artist and Co-Director of Proboscis [<http://proboscis.org.uk>]. Her work is inspired by landscape and human ecologies, and creating new contexts for artistic practice

<http://proboscis.org.uk>

**C.CRED** is a London based – yet nomadic – artist collective and members-run platform for the development of collaborative structures, projects, interventions and other initiatives seeking to link art and aesthetic practice to a wider socio-political context. Although maintained by a small group of people, it operates only through collaboration and through wider, continuously changing collective structures.

the alt.SPACE Group is a newly formed and forming alternative space and project alliance. The idea behind the initiative is to generate a nomadic platform for an informal and on-going critical dialogue around existing artistic practices, strategies, tactics and processes, including both institutional and academic paradigms and self-organized models. The regular activities of the group include art ‘open mic’ sessions, interview and conversation games, reading groups, collaborative writings projects, public space and walking events, and direct interventions into academic and cultural industries and frameworks.

<http://www.ccred.org/altspacegroup.htm>  
[collective@ccred.org](mailto:collective@ccred.org)

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Artquest  
University of the Arts London  
65 Davies St  
London W1K 5DA  
020 7514 6493

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