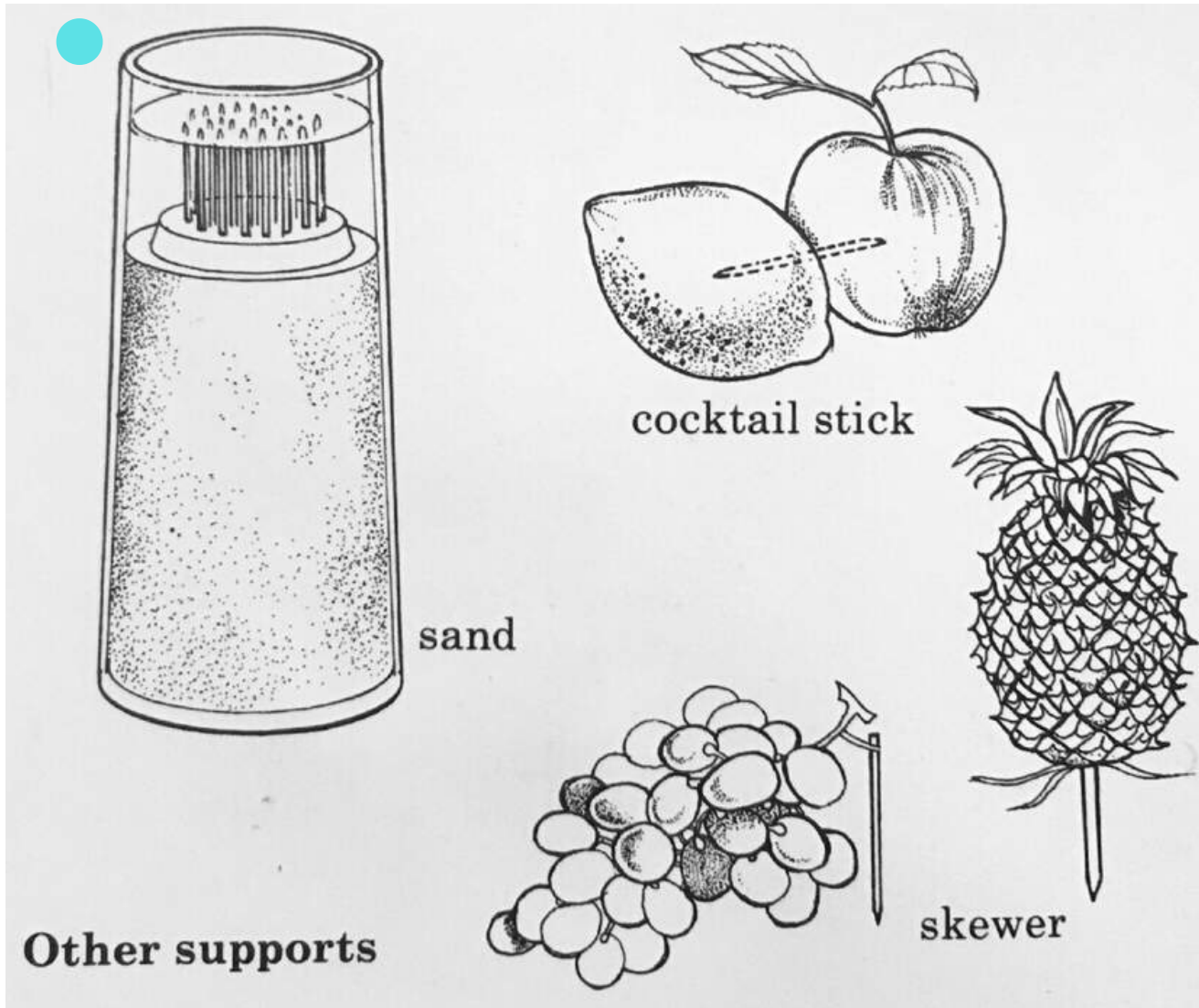


WHO'S DOING THE WASHING UP?

Thoughts on re-imagining in practice



Reflections from a programme of institutional interventions at Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen, Norway (2018) and Lighthouse, Brighton, UK (2019).

With contributions from Jordi Ferreiro, Johanne Hauge Gjerland, Linnea Halveg, Lisa Holmås, Lara Antoine, Bobby Brown, Emma Wickham, Connor Clark, Jamila Prowse, Alli Beddoes and Matt Weston.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Making a flan without knowing the mould

Eva Rowson and Jordi Ferreiro on institutional intervening and the limits of short-term (re)-imagining.

2. Inventing structures

Johanne Hauge Gjerland, Linnea Halveg and Lisa Holmås on taking over Bergen Kunsthall.

3. What can be learnt?

Linnea Halveg on accessibility at Bergen Kunsthall.

4. Snacks are awesome: a tribute to snacks

Lisa Holmås on why snacks are an important and valid expense in processes of re-imagining.

5. Cuñas, topes y sujetapuertas / doorstops, wedges and holding space: Jordi Ferreiro's residency and communal lunches at Lighthouse, July 2019

Lara Antoine on what 'opening up' means for Lighthouse as a building and an organisation.

Bobby Brown on his reflections during the week of communal lunches.

Emma Wickham and Connor Clark on putting maintenance and operations at the core of re-imagining.

6. Does anyone really care? Learning how to sustain a practice in the arts and survive

Jamila Prowse on whether institutions are really listening to the needs of the marginalised groups they want to be more inclusive of – and if they actually care what the answers are.

7. A conversation after the end: who's drying the dishes?

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BEGINNING NOTES

'WHO'S DOING THE WASHING UP?' THOUGHTS ON RE-IMAGINING IN PRACTICE: WHO'S DOING IT, WHO'S INCLUDED IN IT, WHO'S MAINTAINING IT?

A collection of writings gathered from artists, participants and collaborators involved in 'Who's doing the washing up?' — a programme of institutional interventions, artist commissions, events and workshops which took place at Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen, Norway in 2018 and at Lighthouse, Brighton, UK in 2019 as part of the Re-Imagine Europe project supported by Creative Europe.

'Who's doing the washing up?' examines the structures of care, maintenance and work in organisations that enable 'things to happen' and keep them going. It questions how different types of workers — anyone and everyone involved in making an event happen — are involved, supported, exploited and acknowledged and with what consequences.

With contributions from Jordi Ferreiro, Johanne Hauge Gjerland, Linnea Halveg, Lisa Holmås, Lara Antoine, Bobby Brown, Emma Wickham, Connor Clark, Jamila Prowse, Alli Beddoes and Matt Weston.

Re-Imagine Europe is a four-year project involving 10 cultural organisations across Europe, with the intention to respond to current social and political challenges and urge organisations to explore new modes of operation.

Introduction

‘Re-imagining’ has become a well-used word in institutional discourses. Just as when I hear about programmes on ‘radical hospitality’, I am always hopeful when these terms come into institutional thinking. I am hopeful for what potential changes in organisational structures, workforce and decision-making these terms may ignite. But I am wary of their over-use in panel discussions, funding grants and mission and vision papers. These often propose a new way of thinking but fail to provide clarity on how any change will be enacted, and whether anyone is serious about committing to the consequences of that change.

This is something I’ve been preoccupied with during events, talks, workshops and other situations in which I have been part of where ‘re-imagining’ was at the forefront of the programming, but where it was somehow missing from the organisation itself. I kept wondering: with so much re-imagining happening, why do things still feel the same, work the same, look the same? I wondered why the same types of workers were always acknowledged in programme credits, and the same types of workers remained invisible. Why some were always a part of strategy meetings and others were simply dealt out the results. Why I kept receiving the same blank faces from colleagues when I asked if they knew

the name of the cleaner who was maintaining their programmes, exhibitions, offices and organisational infrastructures – or even what they looked like.

What is the concrete possibility for re-imagining when it is discussed in theory on stage, but the same people as always are invited to discuss it? It is also no coincidence that the cleaning, security, invigilation, ticket selling, hospitality roles are also often the lowest paid, on precarious contracts, and the first to be outsourced in organizational reviews. This is a wider, structural issue embedded in how western society still positions value in relation to knowledge, experience and work. If ‘cleaning’ is still considered an ‘embarrassing’ occupation (as told to me by one curatorial colleague) then what hope is there for really re-imagining how we reflect on and re-imagine our workplaces?

How far can re-imagining go if we organise a discussion about it, but all the chairs are put out in the same rows as for any other event? If in our organisations we are really, serious about re-imagining how we organise, how we work, how we structure our organisations, develop our buildings, work with people, build budgets, programme activity and administer decisions then how do we actually change the infrastructures we are working in so we do not end up just reproducing the same models,

narratives and values under a veil of re-imagining?

So with the opportunity to 're-imagine Europe', in my role as Curator at Bergen Kunsthall, Norway, in 2018 and at Lighthouse, Brighton, UK in 2019, I began with a question so seemingly minor but at the same time crucial which formed the overarching title of the whole programme: 'Who's doing the washing up?'

What questions are being asked and how are they being asked?

The Re-Imagine Europe project asks us as the participating organisations to 'respond to the social and political challenges that we are currently facing to change the ways that we interact, urging us as organisations to explore new modes of operation.' The project asks of the organisations involved:

- which audiences do we not yet (but want to) reach?
- which 'tools' are we using, how effective are they, and which (new) strategies can we develop?
- how can we develop sustainable relationships with our audiences, and transform our public into an active 'community of interest' or even 'community of practice'?

Knowing that my time with each organisation was limited (a one-year maternity cover at Bergen Kunsthall and a six-month Curator in Residence position at Lighthouse), it felt important to use the programme to ask my own direct questions in the context of 're-imagination':

- who gets to define which audiences need to be reached, and why?
- who has a say in developing future strategies?
- who determines how effective these tools are and how effectiveness is measured?
- why is it assumed (and by whom) that audiences need to be 'transformed'? And for what purpose?
- and, ultimately, what could happen – or even change – if re-imagining ways of working began with these questions instead?

'Who's doing the washing up?' is something I've asked many many times when I've been organising public events, large or small. Who's doing the work to both prepare and clean up after the panel discussion on radical hospitality? Has anyone thought about the access from the event to the sink? What is the budget

for cleaning? Does anyone who is curating know the name of the cleaner? Do those doing the fundamental jobs of cleaning, invigilating, ticket selling and technical production get a say in how an event is organised?

So, the programme at Bergen Kunsthall and Lighthouse set out to explore: what if all of these questions could be included in processes of re-imagining? What if all workers involved in making things happen could have a voice in how these activities, organisations, buildings could be re-imagined – and then sustained, on an everyday, practical, in-use basis? What would re-imagining look and feel like then? And, with the input of those who will ultimately be the ones making it happen and cleaning up afterwards how much further could re-imagining be actively enacted, sustained and make a change?

Creating space

Bergen Kunsthall is the main contemporary art gallery in Bergen and has a busy, eclectic live programme of concerts, club nights, screenings and events. The building was designed by architect Ole Landmark in the 1930s with the aim of exhibiting ‘pictorial artworks’. Lighthouse is a Brighton-based arts charity currently housed in an old printworks (so it is not purpose-built for art) in the centre of Brighton. It

specialises in working with artists who are exploring new developments in art, technology, science and society. Both organisations also rent out parts of their buildings to other paying tenants: the Norwegian Association for the Blind occupy part of the top floor of Bergen Kunsthall, and Lighthouse rents office space to several different organisations, as well as regularly hiring out its conference and meeting rooms.

"THE KITCHEN WAS THE ONLY PLACE WHERE PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT OFFICES COULD CHAT..."

At Lighthouse, the ‘*Who’s doing the washing up?*’ programme title extended to ‘– *and where’s the sink?*’. The addition of ‘– *and where’s the sink?*’ was a response to Lighthouse’s current aims to re-design the building to feel more open and visible from the outside, with more appropriately designed spaces for the diverse activities, groups and tenants they host in the building. Through conversations with Lighthouse’s tenant organisations it was clear that the tiny kitchen was a vital space in the building. The kitchen was the only place where people from different offices could chat while making lunch, brewing tea or washing up.

I know from experience that the importance of these tiny kitchen spaces is often underestimated and the first to be overlooked or, at worst, taken out altogether of institutional architectural plans which are primarily focusing on public space.

Building as Body: A Handbook for Investigating the Workplace, the recent work of Manual Labours (a collaborative project by Sophie Hope and Jenny Richards) inspiringly explores the architecture of the workplace at Nottingham Contemporary gallery in the UK and directly evidences the effects of the often overlooked and hidden needs of staff for space and time to eat, care and relax during breaks and lunchtime. The work looks into the ways in which buildings and bodies are fluid ecosystems which affect each other, mapping how the circulatory, digestive and (social) reproductive systems operate in the cultural institution. In their research, Hope and Richards ask ‘what symptoms does this building suffer with? What ways can we diagnose and challenge the conditions that perpetuate them?’

And so, part of the programme at Lighthouse was an intention to keep bringing into question how these vital, internal spaces for cooking, cleaning, meeting are considered – alongside the public-facing spaces – when re-designing and re-

imagining.

Who’s included?

The contributions gathered in this report, from artists, participants and collaborators, focus on two projects in the *Who’s doing the washing up?* programme by Barcelona-based artist and educator Jordi Ferreiro:

- Other Supports and Inventing Structures at Bergen Kunsthall, August and November 2018 Jordi Ferreiro collaborated with Siv Bryn, Linnea Halveg, Lisa Holmås and Johanne Hauge Gjerland and members of Unge Kunstjennere (UKK) the young people’s association at Bergen Kunsthall, to explore how an arts organisation can accommodate self-directed areas that give space to different voices and actions. In a series of exploratory meetings and activities, together they planned and enacted a one-day takeover of Bergen Kunsthall to ask: who is the Kunsthall really made for, when the main entrance is not step-free?
- *Cuñas, topes y sujetapuertas / Doorstops, wedges and holding space* at Lighthouse, July 2019 Jordi Ferreiro co-hosted a week of communal lunches with invited guest lunch hosts, developed in conversation with Matt Weston from Brighton-based agency Spacemakers, to ask what cultural

organisations need to do if they genuinely want to become inclusive of different perspectives in the way they work. The lunches were catered by Lalibela Ethiopian Kitchen, Brighton Cauldron, and Lerato Foods and invited different curators, artists and producers working in Brighton and beyond including Ben Messih, Lara Antoine, Boudicca, Chanel Stephens, Saygal Yusuf, Jamila Prowse and Amrita Dhallu.

Both of Jordi's commissioned projects involved collaborations with

workers and associates of Bergen Kunsthall and Lighthouse who are not usually involved in core curatorial or programming decisions or activity: the youth group, the operations teams and tenants. Specifically, these two projects investigated the inner workings of the organisations to try to propose some new ways of reconfiguring existing organisational and architectural structures that would include new uses, voices and challenges in their processes of re-imagining.



The programme then extended to include many more contributors who shaped and made possible these commissions including: Sjur Eide Aas, Tiril S. Absalonsen, Maria Acaso, Karl Andersen and Sjøfarendes Aldershjem Bergen, Øystein Ask and Bergen Kringkaster, Solmaz Aslan, Adan Awale, Platform B, Alli Beddoes, Grethe Bjørndal, Åsa Bjørndal, Oda Førde Braanaas, Thor Brødreskift, Brighton and Hove Food Partnership and Community Kitchen, Bobby Brown, Siv Bryn, Judith Burns, Connor Clark, Josh Craggs, Synne Dahl, Sue Davis, Devil's Dyke Network, Amrita Dhallu, Dino Dikic, Joydeep Dutta and Brighton Cauldron, Åsne Eldøy, Randi Heggernes Eilertsen, Tarik Elmoutawakil, Robin Everett, Eleanor Ferns, Corinna Fitzpatrick, Food and Friendship, Andrea Francke, Kizzie Furini, Stewart Alex Gardiner, Genet and Lalibela Ethiopian Kitchen, Glynis Gillam and Blind Veterans UK, Hannah Gillow-Kloster, Johanne Hauge Gjerland, Sian Habell-Aili, Lars Hallaråker, Sofia Marie Hamnes, Martin Harkjerr Halse, Linnea Halveg, Sofie Hamre, Renate Karin Hårklau, Thea Haug, Ragna Haugstad, Hans Heerema, Ask Holmen, Lisa Holmås, Aleidis Houthoofd, Andrea Grundt Johns, Sarah Jost, Hanna Elise Jozefiak, Mikolaj Karbowski, Vilja Kjersheim, Niklas Kleppe, Mats Kornerud, Gudrun Kringlebotn, Emily Kyriakides, Mai Lahn-Johannessen, Caroline Larikka, Øystein Larssen, Annabel Lee, Xin Li, Jan Richter Lorentzen, Rachel Louis and everyone involved in FestspillKollektivet, Violeta Marchenkova, Dillan Marsh, Olivia Melkonian, Ben Messih, Mid Sussex Amateur Radio Society, Patrick Murphy and Blind Veterans UK Amateur Radio Society, Selim Mutic, Kim Newland, Ruth Oliver, Mai Omer, Peter Paulic, Hilde Marie Pedersen, Jamila Prowse, Martin Midtbø Rokkones, Tuva Mossin, Lucie Rachel, Daniela Ramos, Nikolaj Stavstrup Rasmussen, Ben Richards, David Richards, Røde Kors Bergen, Mass Roman, Maria Rusinovskaya, Steinar Sekkingstad, Jonas Skarmark, Henrik Skauge, Simon Skøien, Karina Sletten and radiOrakel, Tharani Rajah and everyone involved in Bergen Røde Kors, Torjus Slettsnok, Nats Spada, Einride Torvik, Siv Torvik, Claudia Treacher, Sandra Trienekens, Lerato Umah-Shaylor, Vegard Vindenes, Eric Alvin Wangel, Jessica Weiss, Matt Weston, Emma Wickham, Axel Wieder, Annette Wolfsberger, Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, Alex Yousif, Maja Zahl, Thomas Zemancik, Mia Øquist, Mari Hegrenes Øvrebø, Tord Øyen, Stein-Inge Århus, - and many more whom I surely miss including here but who most likely deserve the greatest credit.

An extra special thank you to Jordi Ferreira, Johanne Hauge Gjerland, Linnea Halveg, Lisa Holmås, Lara Antoine, Bobby Brown, Emma Wickham, Connor Clark, Jamila Prowse, Alli Beddoes and Matt Weston for their insightful and thoughtful contributions to this report. To Lara Antoine for giving it shape, to Pip Rowson for making it make some sense, and to Annette Wolfsberger for continually carrying this project and everyone in it. I am so grateful to all the individuals and organisations involved so far in this programme: thank you for sharing in this questioning with me.

The whole 'Who's doing the washing up?' programme, projects, inputs and outputs can be viewed at the Re-Imagine Europe website: <https://re-imagine-europe.eu/>

MID-T-O-E-N-D N-O-T-E-S

W H O G E T S T O D E F I N E W H E R E W E ' R E G O I N G

In a panel discussion at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 2002^[1] titled 'Science Future, Science Fiction', the writer Octavia Butler – the only woman and person of colour on the panel – points to how, in discourses of speculative imagining, it is dangerous to assume that advancement is to keep doing whatever we have been doing, only in a more 'advanced' way. Butler warns of the danger in only seeing the future through the technological advancements we have made already and not through actively broadening our perspectives beyond our current knowledge and positions. She refers to a trope in science fiction writing (and she points to the fact these writers are often also white male writers) which writes the future the same as it is in the authors' own time, but just with more of it or harder or higher.

It is dangerous because those claiming to make a change will most likely end up with something which is called change, but which looks very much the same as it was, only perhaps more embedded than before.

As Octavia Butler writes in her science fiction novel *Parable of the Sower*:

All struggles
Are essentially
power struggles.
Who will rule,
Who will lead,
Who will define,
refine,
confine,
design,
Who will dominate? [2]

In our re-imagining projects, what happens if the same patterns and structures are just reproduced? If the list of acknowledgements in the published catalogues that document programmes on re-imagining still only includes the names of certain workers and fails to applaud with the same value the workers doing the cleaning, poster-hanging, ticket-selling, and washing up of the cava glasses as those doing the curating and programming? Are we really interrogating who is ruling, defining, designing these new worlds?

[1] Octavia Butler speaking at a panel discussion at UCLA in 2002, moderated by Arthur Cover. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgeyVE3NHJM>

[2] Octavia Butler in *Parable of the Sower*, published 1993.

Who's doing the washing up? was formed of interventions which have since ignited change in how Bergen Kunsthall and Lighthouse work. For example, at Bergen Kunsthall now all workers are acknowledged on the exhibition credits. There is of course, a way to go, as there are still organisational discrepancies between the pay, contracts and agency of these different roles. But naming and acknowledging every worker equally in a space which has previously only been for full time or curatorial workers, has made a difference both in the Kunsthall and in the city's network of cultural organisations in 're-imagining' the acknowledgement of all inputs in the workplace. At Lighthouse, the team now are working on developing their public signage for access around the building, involving the programme team in operational work such as sitting in the front of house desk, and continuing the communal lunches with tenants and local catering charities.

The types of interventions which formed *Who's doing the washing up?* don't necessarily translate easily into documentation, a public programme that can be replicated or a report. So, it took me months to settle on a way to write about and collate some of the

things that happened through these projects. And then, about a month before I had promised to submit this 'report', I realised that I had been struggling so much because I had been thinking of it as a report: an evaluation, a summing up, a closure, a sign-off. But the intention of *Who's doing the washing up?* was not to know the answer and be done with it, but to keep on questioning and to do so in every process and at every stage of re-imagining. So that perhaps we might start to think differently about the values we place, without even realising, on particular types of work and the intellect, knowledge and people attributed to them. And then perhaps, re-imagining may become less of an imagining and more of a work in progress towards a new reality.

An evaluation which encourages us to ask more questions rather than affirming what we wanted to hear from the start is a focus of Future of the Left (FOTL).[3] FOTL is the collaborative artistic and research practice of Andrea Francke and Ross Jardine, which developed from their shared interest in administrative and policy-making structures, and specifically their often overlooked but vital role within institutions.

[3] You can sign up to FOTL's amazing monthly newsletters here:

<https://www.gasworks.org.uk/participation/fotl-future-of-the-left-2018-11-30/>

Over the next two years, FOTL will develop a participation evaluation framework for London arts organisation Gasworks' Participatory Residency Programme. The FOTL newsletters are excellent reflections of their evaluation process by asking more and more questions of its development, positioning and outcomes. In the January 2020 newsletter, Andrea Francke asks:

'How do you create an object that not only creates a space of shared instability but that it actually refuses to return you to a state of stability when you leave it? How can an evaluation report which is by nature a tool for closure refuse to accept that closure is a thing?'

With this in mind, this 'report' is an attempt to collectively inquire with people involved in the programme,

and to invite us all to think on what questions still need to be asked. I realised far too late that 'report' was the wrong word to use when I asked everyone to contribute here. I think too often the re-imagining cycle ends with a report, a conclusion of what was achieved. But after the re-imagining, after the revolutionary moment has happened, who is putting what into practice? 'What's going on in these places now? What actually happened, what actually changed? What more can we learn from continuing to evaluate and question our ways of working beyond the project's 'end'? I am incredibly grateful for all of the contributions collected here, and to all of the contributors from whom I keep learning, but in asking for a report I asked everyone for validation of what happened – wouldn't a better question have been: 'Who's doing the washing up now?'

– Eva Rowson, curator, Who's doing the washing up?

MAKING A FLAN WITHOUT KNOWING THE MOULD

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2018

Following Jordi Ferreiro's residency at Bergen Kunsthall and collaboration with the Kunsthall's youth group Unge kunstjennere, I invited him to reflect on his artistic approaches to intervening in institutional structures and how he came to be interested in the way institutions are governed.

The concept of 'making a flan* without knowing the mould' became a useful way for us to think about our different roles and working methods during Jordi's residency — as a curator new to an institution and an artist invited in on a short-term project. Throughout our collaboration, we kept coming back to the question: how can we genuinely contribute to institutional re-imagining (making a flan), while we're still, ourselves, figuring out the context we're imagining from (knowing the mould)? This led to a wider question of: how can artist commissioning move away from short-term, in-out, quickly-defined projects to commissioning which can support and nurture projects which are wobbly, not easy to define from the outset, take time and only take shape as they develop in practice?

This conversation took place over several emails between November and December 2018.

*a flan is a creamy custard dessert in Spain and the UK which sets inside a mould.



JORDI : Hello Eva. To begin this conversation, I think it would be a good trigger to talk about our personal experiences working in cultural institutions and what influenced our work together in Other Supports at Bergen Kunsthall.

My work as an artist and educator has a lot to do with the way I understand horizontality in cultural institutions.

Maybe this is a bit corny, but when I was a teenager I was lucky enough to be able to ‘inhabit’ an institution called CaixaForum – at that time it was called ‘Laboratori de les arts / The Laboratory of the Arts’ at the Palau Macaya in Barcelona. I say ‘inhabit’ because I spent a lot of time in my adolescence in that place. At that time, I was studying an arts baccalaureate, but I have to say I spent more time in that place (skipping classes) than in the classroom. The Laboratory of the Arts had an incredible media library with internet, books, CDs, and I remember seeing exhibitions that marked me all my life, by Félix González Torres, Joan Ponç or Joaquim Lluçà i Olivet among a thousand more... I can say that this institution (which was public, with free entry) transformed me as a person and a citizen and it’s from here I believe that my motivation arises to work with cultural institutions now.

Unfortunately, nothing remains of The Laboratory of the Arts, which has become an institutional monster called CaixaForum.

EVA: Hola Jordi!

Ha estat un moment important en la meua vida com a artista, comissari i treballador institucional per conèixer-te i estic emocionat de començar aquesta conversa.

It’s so nice to start with this very personal point in your life!

My interest in organisational practices began as an art student in Leeds (UK). Due to a lack of established arts infrastructure, there was a supportive and ambitious DIY ethic and energy amongst the city’s musicians and artists – and as young artists, we were inspired to make our own opportunities. I joined several art collectives – Monitor, Black Dogs, Polka Flock – and we organised exhibitions, events, gigs, screenings, etc. in people’s basements, in upstairs rooms in pubs and in empty shops.

It meant we had to find ways to negotiate with a lot of different people, sites and contexts – many beyond the art world. We learned to tune into pre-established rhythms and find ways not just to land our own ways of working but to see how we could work together with others. The organising became my art practice. And now I don’t think of myself as a ‘curator’ really, but more as an artist who likes organising and doing it with others. I think that’s why questions of how different types of work are valued in multi-person projects are always at the front of my mind now when working in institutions.

How does your experience with Laboratori de les arts and feeling like a citizen of that organisation feed into the way you approach making projects in the institutions now?

JORDI: To understand management, coordination or production as an artistic practice is a positioning to which I also feel very close. In fact, I always talk about the artist as a 'hoster' who organises the table or a 'master' of the board game, roles that organise a situation so that the others take the reins...

From my perspective, a good institution involves a very complex creation process to generate a new structure of limitations, needs and opportunities in a respectful way, without eliminating previous structures and dynamics but repositioning them or turning them around. I think it's much easier to create something totally new and overwrite what was previously. But it's certainly not good practice...

This has a lot to do with my residency in Bergen Kunsthall. To understand the role of the artist as an organiser and escape the romantic idea of 'creator-genius'. But how to do it when you arrive into a context on a parachute for only a few weeks? That's why it was important for me to work with the Kunsthall's youth group Unge kunstjennere (UKK): if you have a lack of time, you need accomplices who already understand the context so you can learn from them.

Learning is also my personal motivation, which is why I always resist repeating projects or working alone in the studio. I didn't study Fine Art, so my projects are my approaches in learning to be an artist (or a better artist).

And that's why I understand what you're saying about your education in Leeds as an artist. I think that in the art world we need an education which comes through direct experience and not through a 'trompe-l'œil' of doing exhibitions only inside the university. We need an education that goes outside the academic institution and takes us to other spaces, in direct dialogue with the non-professional art world, to see new fields of possibility and new ways of making art and being artists.

I'm sure this is something you also experienced organising parties, events and club nights. It's difficult to quantify that learning-through-doing experience because these experiences are often seen as 'just having fun' and not as 'proper' sites for learning.

EVA: Hosting has always been a big part of how I work too. And more and more it's become a core of my practice as a curator and organiser. While I was studying at Open School East in London in 2012, I began a project called Wishyou'd been here with artist Andrea Francke which was a collaboration to reflect on organising and hosting through actually doing it, not just theorising it.



We organised lots of parties and events to support musicians, artists, caterers and friends and this led to an ongoing fascination in examining the structures of care and labour that enable 'things to happen', and more specifically how different people are involved, supported or exploited in the process. I found we kept coming up against questions such as "what different relations are created between people when you're charging for drinks or not, or when you're paying everyone the same or not?" So running these events became a way for me to reflect on larger administrative and infrastructural questions such as how to remunerate people, share cultural capital, provide authorship and autonomy amongst teams – and how do different structural organisational and hosting choices reproduce, reify or challenge these parameters?

I wanted to ask you to introduce the concept of 'la musea', which was how we first started working together. In Spanish, the noun for 'museum' (meaning a cultural institution like Bergen Kunsthall) is masculine: el museo. So how did this idea to re-configure the word as a feminine-noun – la musea – to re-think the institution from a feminist perspective come about?

JORDI: La musea is an inconclusive concept, we are constantly thinking about it and I think that's what makes it interesting. It is an open conversation started in Barcelona a few years ago between both of us with many others

since including Adrian Schindler, Ángel Palacios, Ariadna Guiteras, Ariadna Rodríguez, Caterina Almirall, Eulàlia Rovira, Lara García Díaz, María Acaso, Jack Young, nyamnyam, Priscila Clementti and Sonia Fernández Pan, people who all have a connection with cultural institutions in different roles and fields. We have always tried to make 'la musea' not only a conversation concept, but a conversation grounded in actual practice from which to learn all together.

The concept of 'la musea' is born from a very simple premise:

Would it be possible to imagine an institution that follows transfeminist policies? An institution not governed by hierarchical regimes that perpetuate infrastructures from economic, military or colonial spheres (which many of us found ourselves working in at the time), but instead embraced ways of working more akin to assembly culture, horizontality, cooperative and collaborative organising which recognise and equally value all the different work and people involved?

EVA: The title of the programme at Bergen Kunsthall *Who's doing the washing up?* stems from our work together in 'la musea'. For me, 'la musea' was a way to ask questions back to institutions who were programming endless symposiums on 'radical hospitality', but in those symposiums we were still finding

ourselves sitting in the same rooms, in the same configurations, with the same people speaking – and still no one knowing the name of the cleaner doing the washing up at the end. I kept thinking, it would be much more radical if a worker actually doing the hospitality work in the institution was asked to join the panel, rather than others theorizing about it. The focus for Re-Imagine Europe is to imagine new institutional futures – but I wanted to ask who decides what these new futures will look like? Who are these futures for? Who’s doing the work to sustain these new futures once they’ve been imagined? And how do we invite artists into our institutions to think about these questions with us?

The questions asked at the outset of the Re-Imagine Europe project were:

- Which audiences do we not yet (but want to) reach?
- Which tools’ are we using, how effective are they, and which (new) strategies can we develop?
- How can we develop sustainable relationships with our audiences, and transform our public into an active ‘community of interest’ or even ‘community of practice’?

When I invited you to do a residency at Bergen Kunsthall, we started by asking some questions back to these questions:

- Why do we want to reach new audiences? And who are these identified as?
- Who is making these ‘tools’ and who determines their ‘effectiveness’? Who is included in this strategy-making?
- Why is there an urgency to ‘transform’ our publics? What does this actually mean? Who does the process of transformation benefit? What are we hoping for and who says we are the ones who have the knowledge to do this?
- And who is the ‘we’ here? If the ‘we’ is Bergen Kunsthall or the Re-Imagine Partners are we all agreed on how we interpret these questions is important to us? And who specifically within our organisations is included in this ‘we’?

Your proposal for Bergen Kunsthall was to start by asking questions of the Kunsthall’s own ways of working – who makes the decisions, who is on the washing up rota, who working here feels ownership in this building? To pay attention to the inner workings of the Kunsthall and our own positions, privileges, blindspots, biases before we can start to ‘transform’ any other communities beyond our own.

You and I talked about this process as ‘making a flan without knowing the mould’: the challenge of making an end product which is required to ‘engage new audiences’ in a limited amount of time



"I kept thinking, it would be much more radical if a worker actually doing the hospitality work in the institution was asked to join the panel, rather than others theorizing about it."

- Eva Rowson, in conversation with Jordi Ferreiro



whilst figuring out the politics, histories and current urgencies of a completely new locality. In processes of institutional re-imagining which are focused on developing new audiences but at the same time continue to preference quantity of projects over long-term investments, how can institutions work with artists to develop projects which lead to genuine re-thinking of the ways they work, build relations and embed change beyond the project's timeline?

Could you say a bit more about this idea of the flan and the mould in your approach at Bergen Kunsthall?

JORDI: This title came to us when talking about methodologies for working with people in short-term art projects, and respecting their desires and needs. To make a flan without knowing the mould in some way explains how to start a project without knowing how it will end and what kind of output will come from it. It's exactly as the title explains: you have to create something but you don't have a structure to do it, so it needs time to give it a shape, and sometimes it's not the shape you expected, and that turns into a really interesting shape, or many shapes which surprise you, serendipities from which you learn.

I can't imagine the project at Bergen Kunsthall in another way. It was so interesting to arrive in Bergen and try to understand the context, meeting all the inhabitants related to Bergen Kunsthall. It was also extremely

serendipitous to discover that the Norwegian Blind Association shares the same building as the Kunsthall... I think in that moment our project started to take shape, and we knew that was a very special shape.

'Making a flan without knowing the mould' has also been a collective reflection about the social importance of cultural institutions, and how these institutions consider citizenship. Who gets to participate in their culture, who gets excluded, what are the edges and boundaries of the Kunsthall's shape?

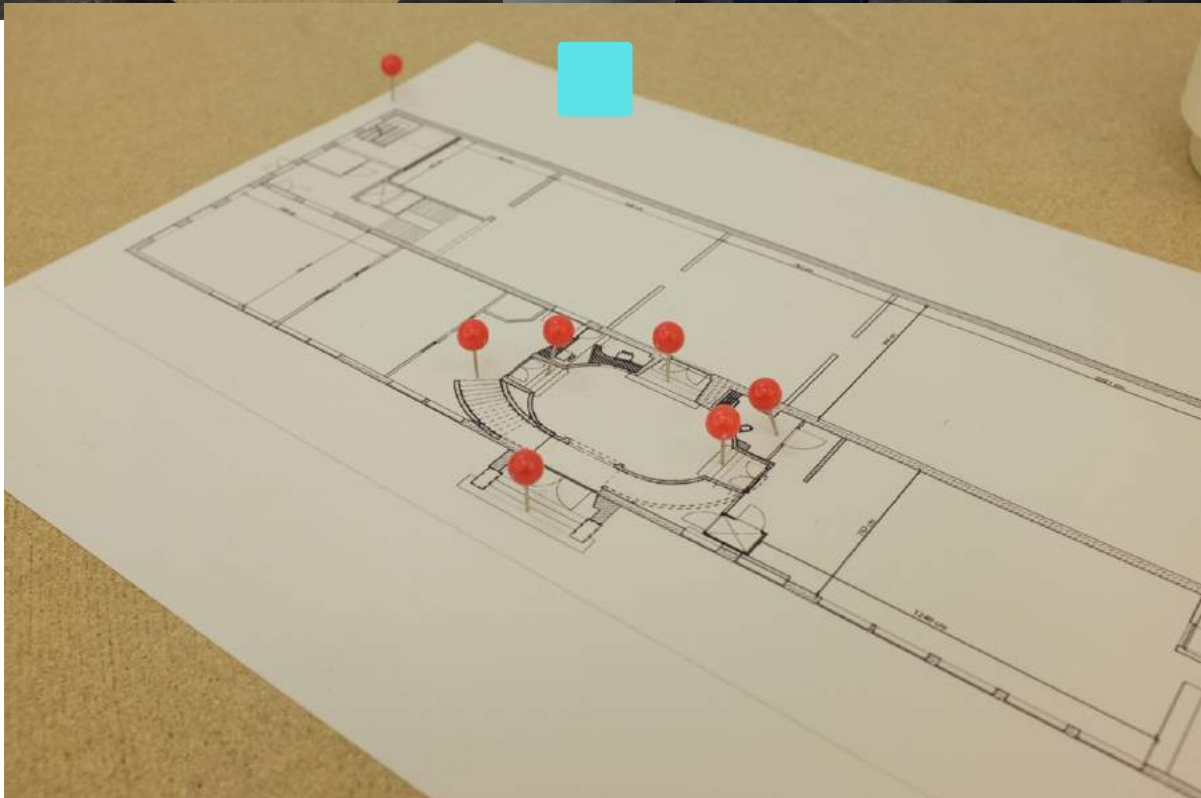
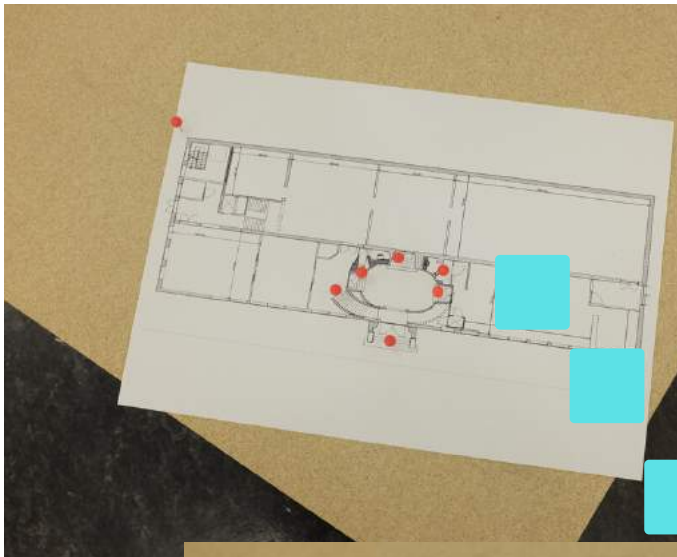
We saw how it could be interesting to work with the young people in UKK, who had already been working as part of the Kunsthall for over a year, in an intervention in the Kunsthall – and for them to decide, programme and manage with the institution for one day.

It seems clear to me that there is no possibility of real transformation in a project of one, three or even 12 months. A true transformation of imagination will only happen over an extended period of time. In my experience, to make real change, real re-imagining and to change institutional dynamics we have to make space for long-term changes, not actions that will only last a few days...

We can do an incredible project in 24 hours that can change the whole museum for that day, but soon it will return to its usual dynamics...so I like to

think, as artists/educators/cultural agents in general, that what we can propose are precedents or suggestions for other ways of working. To start to sand off the edges of the white cube and turn the shape into a squircle* – or a shape we don't yet know the name of.

(* a square with rounded tips)



TAKEOVER: TAKEOVER:

Saturday 10 November 11.00H–17.00

Saturday 10 November 11.00H–17.00

Bergen Kunsthall Rasmus Meyers allé 5,

5015 Bergen, Norway

With Unge Kunstjennere

With Unge Kunstjennere
and artist Jordi Ferreiro

INVENTING STRUCTURES

Re-
Imagine
Europe



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

BERGEN KUNSTHALL

AC/E

INVENTING STRUCTURES

NOVEMBER 2018

Johanne Hauge Gjerland, Linnea Halveg and Lisa Holmås of Unge kunstkjennere reflect on their collaboration with Jordi Ferreiro.

The collaboration began with a series of workshops in August 2018, exploring Bergen Kunsthall from top to bottom – including visiting the Norges Blindforbund (Norwegian Association of the Blind), who occupy part of the top floor of the Kunsthall.

The collaboration culminated in a one-day takeover of Bergen Kunsthall, November 2018. Here, Johanne, Linnea and Lisa discuss the collaboration.

JOHANNE HAUGE GJERLAND, LINNEA HALVEG AND LISA
HOLMÅS (UNGE KUNSTKJENNERE)

BERGEN KUNSTHALL

5



LISA: The first thing we did was to look at the Kunsthall from every angle and every corner. The Who's doing the washing up? project, funded by the EU, was to look at Kunsthall: how is the organisation built up and how different types of work are valued, like the cleaning. And to look at: who is the Kunsthall really accessible to?

The first thing was to deconstruct the organisation and look at it from every corner by visiting the sound engineer, the backstage spaces and the spaces where they make all the cables for Landmark [Bergen Kunsthall's bar, concert, nightclub and event space] which I was really excited about because I like soldering! Then we went to the roof (even though we weren't really allowed to go to the roof) and to the basement, the woodworking room where a lot of the exhibitions and installations are built and where the technicians work with artists to build what they need or change the gallery spaces altogether.

And we ate lots of snacks!

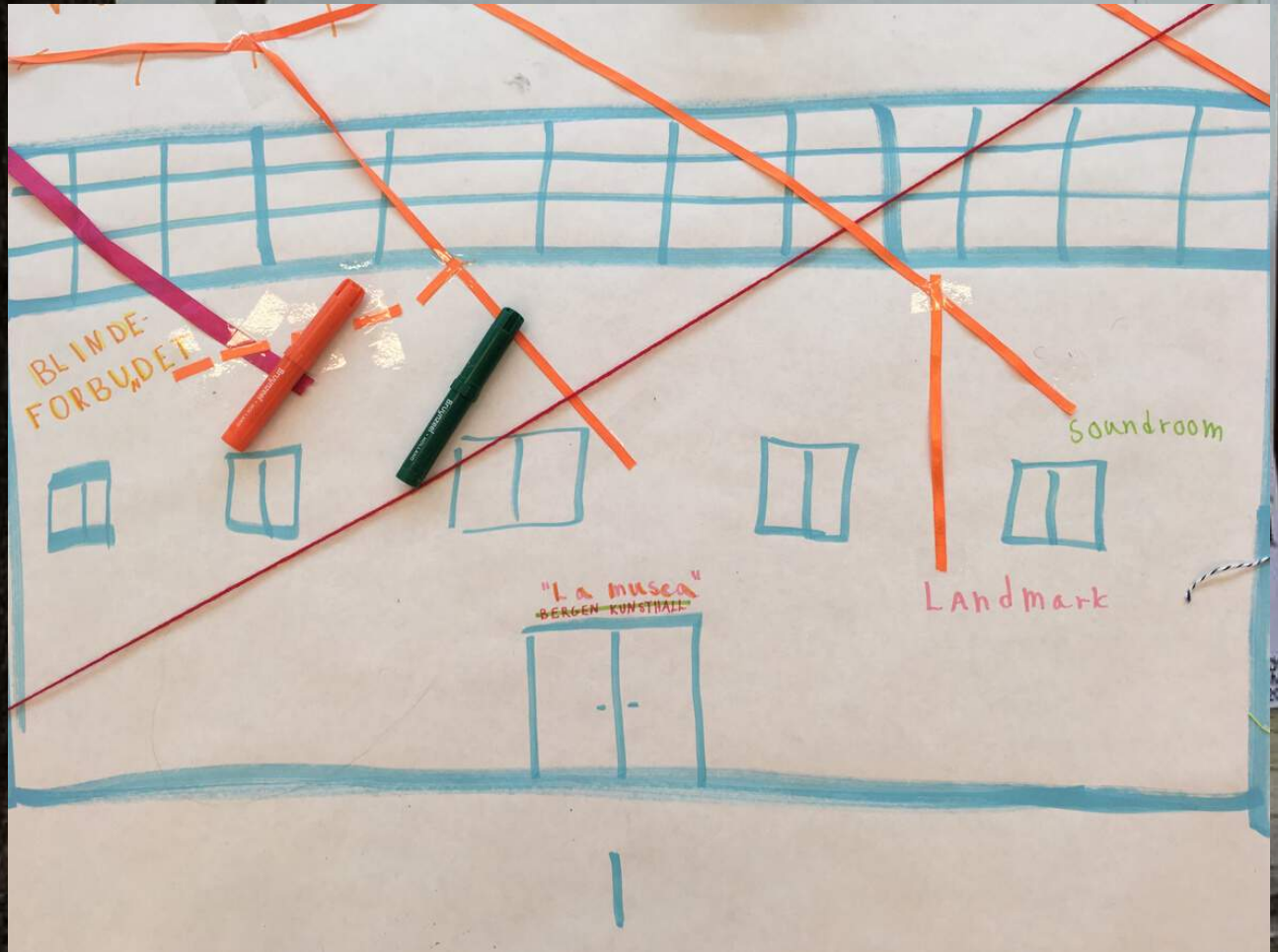
We visited the Blind Association because they rent part of the Kunsthall for their offices and meeting/event space. We wanted to talk to them and explore every corner of the Kunsthall, because this part usually isn't open to us. We met the people who are working there, and they talked to us about different

forms of blindness and visual impairments and different tools and aids people with a visual impairment use in order to help them. We also talked about what's important to remember when working with blind people and how society is or isn't accessible to blind people – a lot of things you don't think about when you're not blind.

For example, Festplassen right outside Bergen Kunsthall or the steps in front of Johannes Church: people with visual impairment can't use those. The way those areas have been designed means the ground is monotone, it's the same colour, and so people with a visual impairment can't determine the edges of steps from the flat ground, for example, so they can't navigate the area easily – which means they're not accessible to them. And so having different colours, coloured glassware in cafés, coloured handles on doors is really important so people can clearly distinguish the world around them.

The Blind Association also share their spaces with a few unions because they like working with other people.

Then we went back to the Kunsthall and ate more snacks. We made a giant map of the things we had learnt and looked at how we could connect these things in a takeover of the Kunsthall in some way. How could we make the Kunsthall more accessible and who can we invite to do this with us?



15T
MAY
2018

On the map, we also replaced the Kunsthall sign with 'la musea'. Jordi talked about how in Spanish, the word museum is a masculine noun: museO. So, he introduced us to thinking about what a museA would be – taking a feminist look at what an institution can be.

EVA: That was all in two days! In August. And then Jordi came back in November, and we decided together to take over the Kunsthall for a day.

LISA: By then, Johanne had joined us. We chose to do the takeover on a day in between exhibitions where we could use the gallery space how we wanted to.

The front entrance of the Kunsthall isn't accessible and has only steps, no ramp. As it's a historical building, it's difficult to change the facade. There is a ramped entrance but it's around the back. So, if you're in a wheelchair you have to call someone to open up the side entrance and you have to go all the way around the building in through a space which is filled with dust and cobwebs in order to get into the Kunsthall.

LINNEA: And there were actually branches and twigs all over the ramp from the tree, which is growing up through the ramp! Making it a really uneven surface.

LISA: Yes, the ramp on the other side of the road into the next-door KODE museum building was really nice and flat, whereas the one in the Kunsthall is starting to bend because the roots of the tree underneath were warping the stone surface of the ramp.

So, we closed the front entrance to the Kunsthall and then we made the ramped back door the main entrance for the day. We took away the dust, we put carpets down and made it nice to come into and re-did the signage so people coming would understand how to get into the building. We thought it would only make the Kunsthall more accessible for the day for people in wheelchairs, but it turns out there were a lot of people with prams and parents with small children who were grateful for the ramped entrance too.

Then we invited people through the ramped entrance and into our gallery space – where we had the maps for people to tell us their thoughts on accessibility. And we offered them snacks!

EVA: The snacks were amazing! Johanne made free snacks for everyone who came – amazing brownies!

LINNEA: Inside, we worked with the Kunsthall technician Robin Everett to make an alternative ramp to illustrate

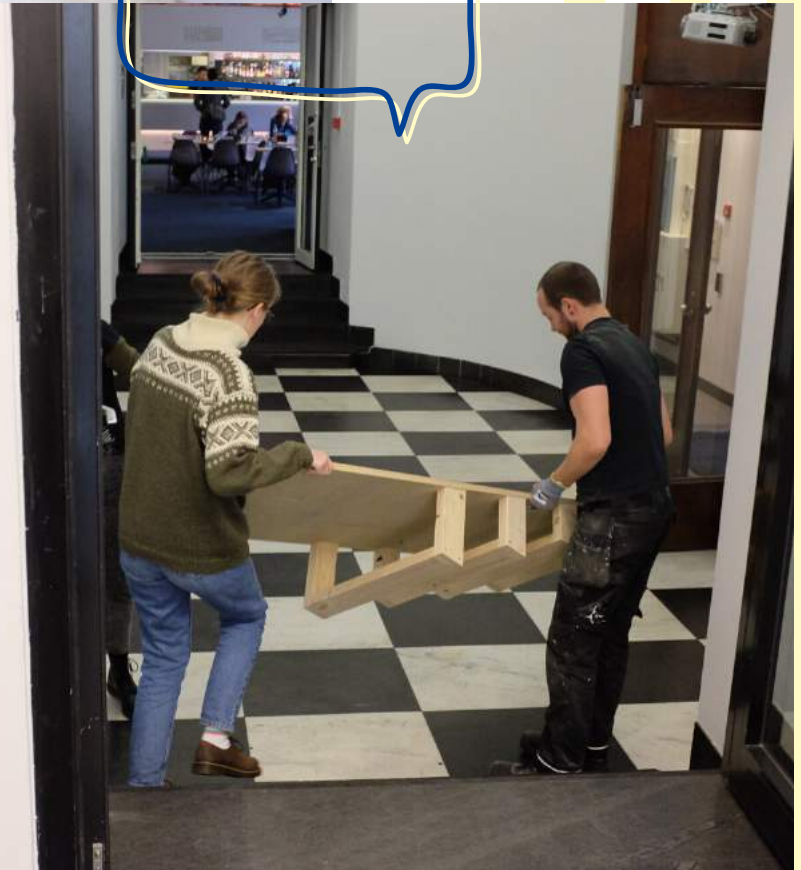
Who is the Kunsthall for?



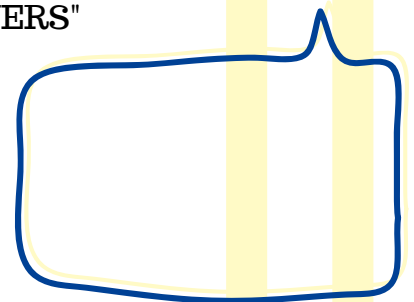
"COOL PEOPLE"



"POSH PEOPLE"



"ART LOVERS"



"THOSE WHO ARE OPEN THEMSELVES"

how even when you get inside the Kunsthall there is still only step access between the galleries, foyer and Landmark café. The ramp was just a suggestion as if it was built to the measurements for a wheelchair, with the correct gradient, it would be about eight metres long and would cover the whole foyer.

LINNEA: Since the exhibitions were closed, most of the people coming were going to Landmark to eat so there were a lot of families with small children and they were happy because for the first time they had a ramp to go inside with their pushchairs! Mostly, people would come in and then pass straight by us in the gallery to go and eat, but after some time they came back and started to talk to us about the questions we posed about how accessible the Kunsthall is, how it's designed, and who for, and how they would change the design of the Kunsthall if they could. The children were playing in the galleries and the whole space had a different, social feel during the day. People were enthusiastic and stayed for a long time with us and so a lot of smart and interesting stuff came up throughout the day.

EVA: What kind of comments did people have?

LISA: We had the question: 'how should the Kunsthall look?' And people wrote there should be

comfortable seating.

Free snacks are important! But maybe I wrote that...!

LINNEA: And then some people wrote new questions that aren't answered yet.

LISA: We also asked: 'is the Kunsthall accessible to everyone?' And people wrote: 'the secret side entrance is difficult to find'. 'No more stairs'. 'The Kunsthall should be free for everyone'. People contributed in their different languages – English, German, Spanish as well as Norwegian.

And the last question was 'who is the Kunsthall for?'

LINNEA: And people answered very differently. Someone said: 'art lovers' and 'cool people', 'posh people'. Someone wrote 'those who are open themselves'.

LINNEA: And then we made this giant balloon structure! Out of plastic and fans.

LISA: In August, we started the workshop by making a giant plastic 'building' together inside the Kunsthall, using thin plastic sheets and tape. It was a way to design a building together which could move and change. Once we'd made the structure, with different rooms, we used an electric fan to inflate it and it was big enough for us to sit

inside. It was really fun!

LINNEA: So we did a similar thing on the takeover day – which the children thought was wonderful!

EVA: Jordi is interested in making our own architecture and how museums and art institutions tend to be fixed structures, white walls, with rules of how to act or behave in these spaces – but what happens when we make our own structures? How would they look and feel?

LISA: We projected the Kunsthall onto the plastic building, so the Kunsthall building warped and changed shape.

EVA: The whole day had a feeling of warping the Kunsthall and how you can change how the Kunsthall works, by redirecting movement through it.

LISA: It felt like we were creating something bigger than ourselves and having a lot of fun with that.

LINNEA: People would stop and look at the posters and questions and I would come up to them and say ‘and what do you think?’ and they would say ‘I don’t know’. And then I would just give them a pen and say ‘just try and write what you think’. And they were hesitant, especially the Norwegians! But then, in the end, most people wrote something.

LISA: Also it was great seeing people feeling comfortable to do stuff, sit down, play in the galleries without us asking in the end.

JOHANNE: Being able to interact with the different people coming to the Kunsthall was really great. And also, that we made something; it was a process of working together. It wasn’t just hanging up a picture, and people coming to look.

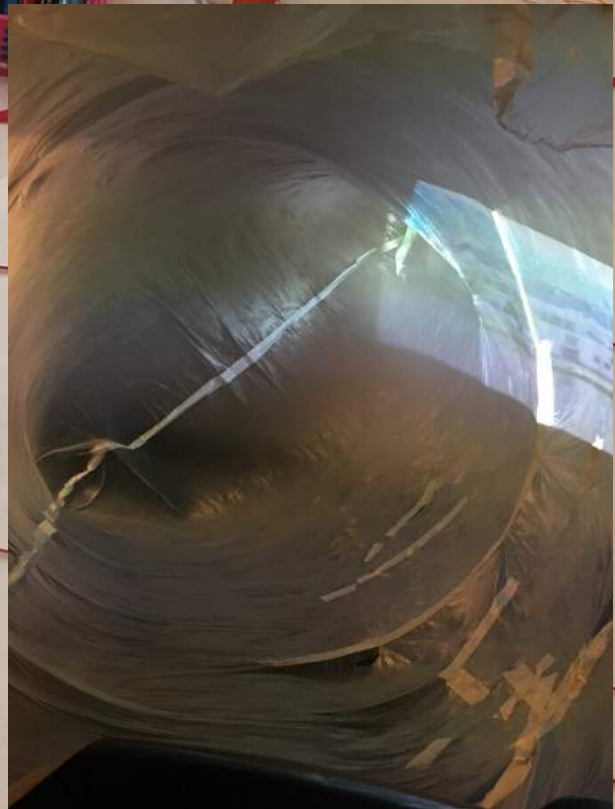
LINNEA: It was an active process, which changed through the day and through the different workshops with Jordi. When we had the first workshop, we started planning an event but what we ended up with was far from what we had planned.

LISA: I think it was great that people also had their eyes opened about how Kunsthall is made. People said to us ‘we never thought about how the Kunsthall wasn’t accessible to everyone’, ‘we never knew there was a side, ramped entrance’. So people were really thankful that they now knew where it was and could use it.

EVA: I think through closing the main entrance you made a lot of people think about the access to the Kunsthall and who is actually included in this ‘main’ in the ‘main entrance’ – and who actually is instantly marginalised from the ‘main’ because they can’t use the main entrance.



LAN



TO
DIE
#

forbo
ordal

rett

8

Spring
vår 2014

BLADE



EVA: You also moved all the signage from the front entrance to the side entrance to make it really visible as usually the side entrance only has a small sign letting you know it's an entrance to the Kunsthall.

I think you really made these things really visible, perhaps for the first time.

LISA: I think the thing I enjoyed most was making it happen.

LISA: Yes! It was fun to do something with an existing space but making it our own.

And if we did it again, I would bring more snacks!



Johanne Hauge Gjerland, Linnea Halveg and Lisa Holmås are members of Unge kunstkjennere, a group of young people who meet regularly at Bergen Kunsthall with an aim to give young people their own voice in contemporary art and make contemporary art more accessible to their peers. The project provides opportunities to become actively involved in the institution's creative programme, work with artists and employees, gain professional experience, and develop creative skills.

Siv Bryn, Dino Dikic, Thea Haug also joined the workshops with Jordi in August 2018. Selim Mucic documented the whole process in a short film which can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/341757871>

WHAT CAN BE LEARNT?

JANUARY 2020

Following the collaboration between Unge kunstjennere (UKK) and Jordi Ferreiro to take over Bergen Kunsthall for the day, I asked Linnea Halveg from UKK to share some reflections on what happened during the workshops with Jordi, in the lead up to the takeover - and what is still left to happen after the takeover came to an end.

LINNEA HALVEG



When Eva asked if Unge kunstjennere wanted to take part in a workshop exploring the Kunsthall, we thought it was a perfect task for our group. At that point, we had no idea that the workshop would lead to us ‘taking over’ Bergen Kunsthall! Exploring the different parts of the Kunsthall from top to bottom was fun. It somehow felt a bit naughty, like we did something we weren’t supposed to, which I guess is natural when you move out of your assigned area. You are crossing an invisible border.

The visit to the Blind Association made a strong impression on us. We became more aware of all the things we don’t think about in everyday life that create problems for those with reduced vision. A pale, monochrome colour palette is problematic when your vision is reduced because everything looks the same. A simple solution, that would make their lives easier, is to use strong colours. Our Kunsthall however, as with most other institutions and art galleries, only uses white, grey and natural colours: an understandable choice when the art should be in focus, but aesthetics prevents the accessibility.

Accessibility quickly became our focus after this. The main entrance of Bergen Kunsthall is not accessible for those with a disability, or those not able to carry a stroller up the stairs, they will need to use the side entrance. The side entrance is on the side of the building and if it hadn’t

been for our exploration, we wouldn’t even know it was there. You cannot open the door and go into the Kunsthall yourself; you need someone on the inside to unlock two doors. This can be both unpractical and unpleasant. The ramp itself was not much to brag about either: uneven, covered in branches, not very welcoming.

"AESTHETICS PREVENTS THE ACCESSIBILITY."

On the day of the takeover, we closed the main entrance and used bright coloured tape to make arrows leading all visitors to the side entrance which for the occasion was open and welcoming.

During the takeover there were no exhibitions so visitors either came for the takeover event or to visit the Landmark café. We got an unexpected, positive response from the café guests.

We had prepared a couple of questions about who the Kunsthall was made for and what changes visitors wished could be made. These were not only questions we thought fitted the Re-Imagine Europe project, but questions that our group

Unge kunstkjennere also discuss at our own meetings.

Some of the themes we normally work with are exactly ‘who is an art gallery made for?’ and ‘how can Kunsthallen be an open, inviting place for everyone?’ Being able to explore those questions in an event where suddenly we were ‘in charge’ was a wonderful opportunity.

NOTE TO EDITOR: I am sorry this sounds like a lab report. I think school has ruined me.

For us, the project was a wonderful experience since we got the opportunity to ask the questions that we keep discussing amongst ourselves with a wider audience.

We are the youth group at Bergen Kunsthall but also outsiders. Even though we are included in the institution we are outsiders as we play no part in the main operation and function of the gallery. Even the simple act of exploring the building from the top (literally on top of the roof) to bottom (I doubt most of the employees have crawled behind the ventilation system into the hidden room in the basement) gave a new insight into the institution. Some of the most interesting places were not the exhibition rooms themselves but the other rooms we never see.

The workshop itself was fun. Try to plan and build a structure of plastic bags, tape and a fan is a challenge everyone should do. This activity was repeated at the takeover and proved to be a huge hit

among the children at the café. The planning of the takeover itself became the biggest mind-map I have seen and high ambitions. The plan was inevitably scaled down and turned into something completely different from what we first imagined. What was initially imagined as a day of events people could see turned into a collaborative workshop. I think that was even better as we then could continue exploring what an art gallery is and has the potential to become...

The most obvious outcome from the takeover was making visible the lack of accessibility for wheelchair users and difficult colours in the Kunsthall for those with reduced sight. This is not an unknown problem but not something Bergen Kunsthall can solve easily in the architecture either since the building itself is protected as Norwegian heritage.

What, then, can kunsthallen learn? The questions asked during the takeover about what people thought about an art gallery can point in the right direction. Many people felt that art galleries are posh, something not meant or available for everyone. Not because it is expensive, but because the idea and feeling tied to the gallery stereotypically belong to a specific group of people. When asked for a solution to this, people often responded that they wanted an inviting space. Somewhere they could just be, meet up. Sounds simple enough but how exactly can a gallery become a place people just want to meet and stay in without losing focus on its main goal: presenting art?





Linnea Halveg is a member of Unge kunstkjennere, a group of young people who meet regularly at Bergen Kunsthall with an aim to give young people their own voice in contemporary art and make contemporary art more accessible to their peers. The project provides opportunities to become actively involved in the institution's creative programme, work with artists and employees, gain professional experience, and develop creative skills.

"SNACKS ARE
AWESOME."

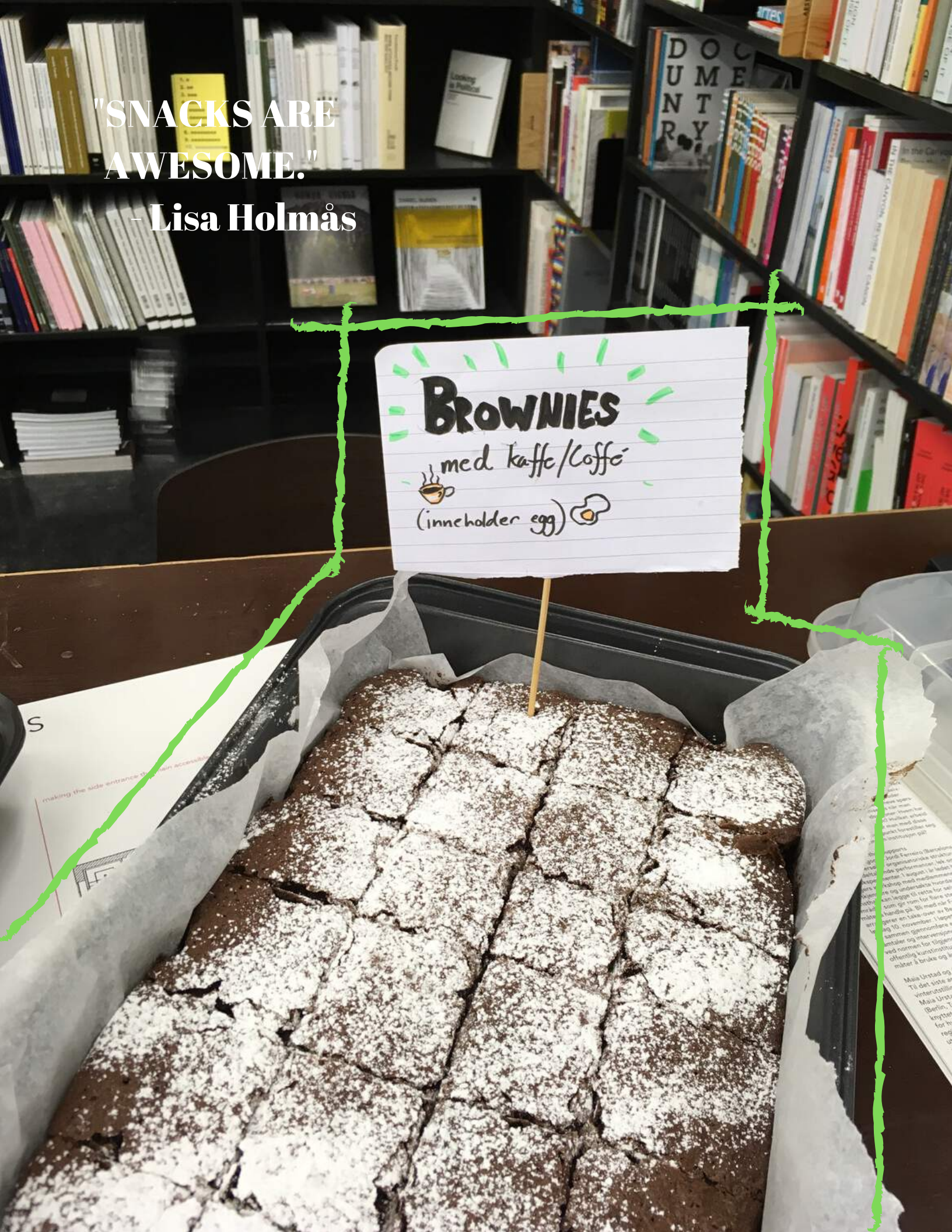
- Lisa Holmås

BROWNIES

med kaffe/Coffe



(inneholder egg)



SNACKS ARE AWESOME: A TRIBUTE TO SNACKS

MARCH 2019

Snacks and refreshments were sometimes the only 'materials and production' expenses incurred during many of the workshops and events as part of the Who's doing the washing up? programme. These expenses offered everyone in attendance some nourishment during long workshops and discussions. In the majority of the projects invited participants or visitors beyond the lead artists and collaborators weren't remunerated for their time or input, even though they gave so much at the time, and so providing (good and thoughtful) refreshments was the least that could be offered. But, I am constantly surprised how often snacks don't feature as valid expenses in funding grants, especially in projects which include working with people. And Lisa Holmås from Unge kunstkjennere agrees...

LISA HOLMÅS



During the planning phase of the takeover of Bergen Kunsthall, from the workshops we had with Jordi Ferreiro in August to the meetings right before the event itself, one of the things I enjoyed the most was the fact that we had snacks available in different shapes and sizes. This naturally meant that the takeover itself had to include snacks as a result. Free snacks that is.

Why are snacks important?

When hosting an event, whether it's a takeover of an art institution or something else, you want people to come to and, more importantly, stay for the duration of the event. When you give people free snacks, you give them a reason to come and a reason to stay.

Snacks:

- bring people together
- make it more 'lav-terskel'
- invite people to sit down
- make it easier for people to sit down and stay

Why snacks are important and what they mean to you:

Linnea Halveg: Crowded places always seem very overwhelming, but when there is food involved you have a reason to go and find a way to stay.

Jakub Łazarowicz: To not die from hunger

Eva Rowson: I think they are important because it brings people together and makes them want to stay. I think when you invite people to come to your event or prosjekt then they made an effort to come and give you their attention and so it feels right to host them and give them something to eat and drink, as something in return for them giving their time to you.

Art Gallery Director: They manage to get you through the little lows that inevitably build up. Good snacks keep you going.

Lisa Holmås is a member of Unge kunstjennere, a group of young people who meet regularly at Bergen Kunsthall with an aim to give young people their own voice in contemporary art and make contemporary art more accessible to their peers. The project provides opportunities to become actively involved in the institution's creative programme, work with artists and employees, gain professional experience, and develop creative skills.

● CUÑAS, TOPES Y SUJETAPUERTAS
● DOORSTOPS, WEDGES AND
● HOLDING SPACE

● JULY
● 2019



● S P A C E ●

EVA ROWSON / JORDI
FERREIRO / MATT WESTON /
BEN MESSIH / VIRAL ALUMNI
/ JAMILA PROWSE / AMRITA
DHALLU / LIGHTHOUSE TEAM

● COMMUNAL LUNCHES AT LIGHTHOUSE ●

BEING OPEN

JULY 2019

Writer and editor Lara Antoine was invited to report on the whole week of activity and discussions during 'Cuñas, topes y sujetapuertas / doorstops, wedges and holding space' at Lighthouse, July 2019. Lara's position in her reportage is as a former participant in Lighthouse's Viral programme, a speaker at one of the communal lunches herself and as an independent video maker, writer, founder and editor of online media platform AVRA, based in Brighton.

LARA ANTOINE



INITIAL THOUGHTS

I was delighted to be asked to document a week of lunches, as part of artist Jordi Ferreiro's residency at Lighthouse.

We explored how we can use Lighthouse as a welcoming space for the local community both in-house and beyond.

Before arriving at Lighthouse, I noted down some thoughts I had about how we currently use the space and what that could mean for other young people like me.

Here are a few thoughts:

- Viral - a six-month mentorship programme that teams 16-25 year olds with industry professionals exploring photography, videography and music. Viral utilised Lighthouse's space well and a youth-led, mentor-guided approach made it liberating to be part of.
- Last Dance - curated by Associate Artistic Director Elijah, Last Dance explored the changing space of club culture in the UK. The programme ran with a month of events in May 2018 and were good at engaging people who were in the arts as well as the music scene. It was a hub where those disciplines could cross comfortably.

WHERE IS LIGHTHOUSE?

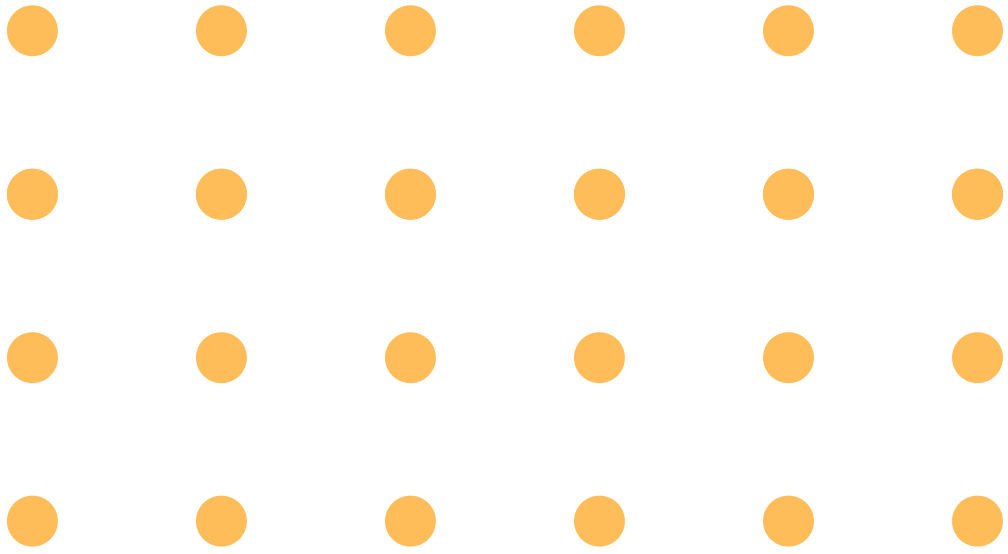
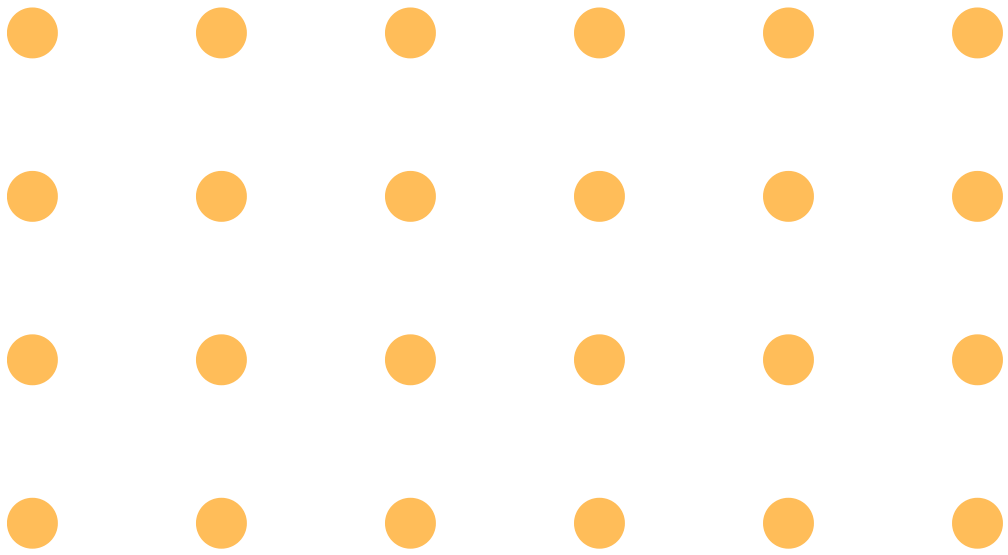


WHERE IS LIGHTHOUSE?

- Aiming to focus on the long term. Keeping in touch with the Viral alumni for future opportunities, talks and events.

I was intrigued when I heard all of the doors would be open throughout the course of the week because Lighthouse is easy to walk past, not many people know about it or where it is. So I was interested to find out what that looked like and how the public would react as they walked past.

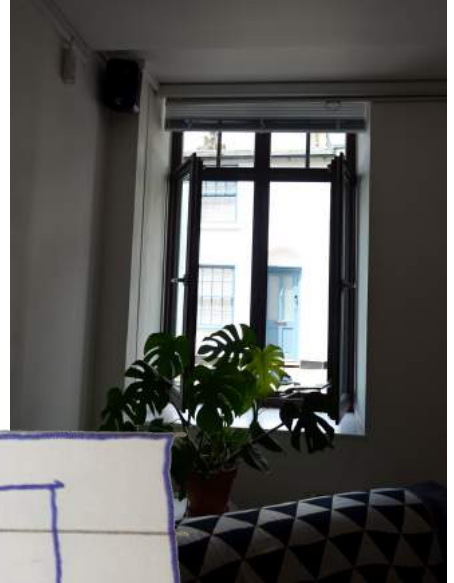




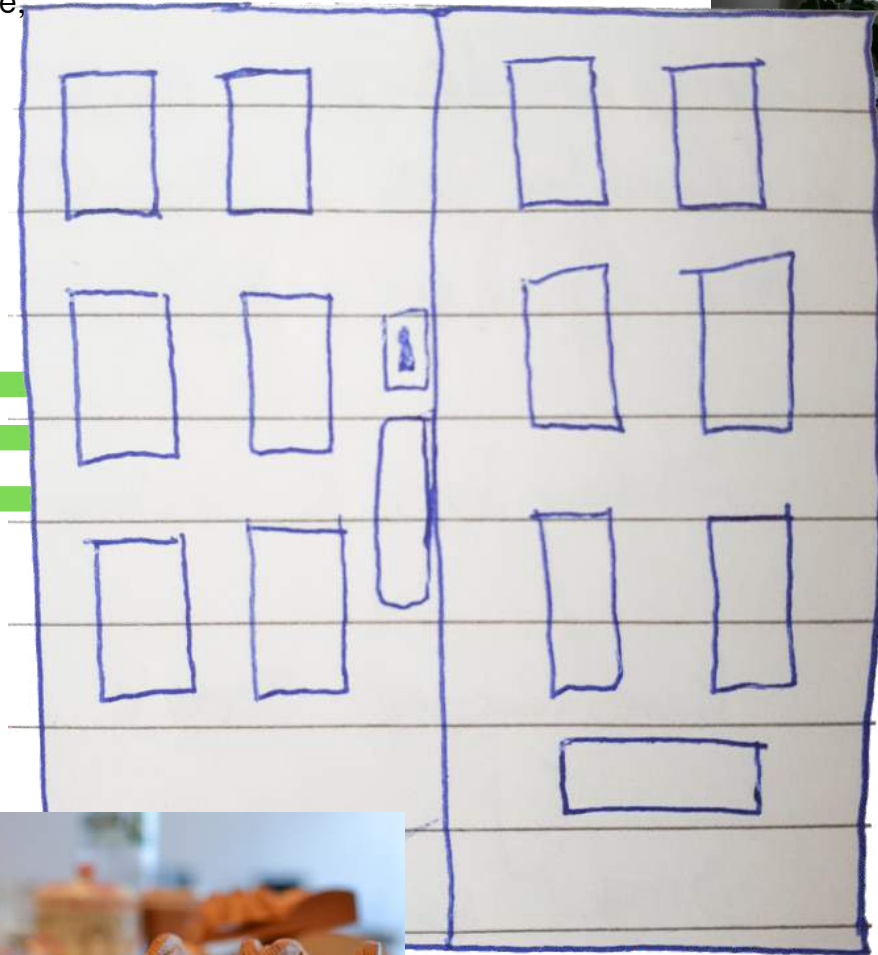
DAY 1

Internal Lighthouse Lunch

There were confused faces from the tenants as they walked through the building as we had lunch together. We spoke about the potential possibilities that could improve the physical state of the building. This included dropping the main wall back to potentially accommodate for parents with pushchairs to shelter in the rain, a place to come and observe or interact with art to pass time, or read books like the ones we collected over the weeks.



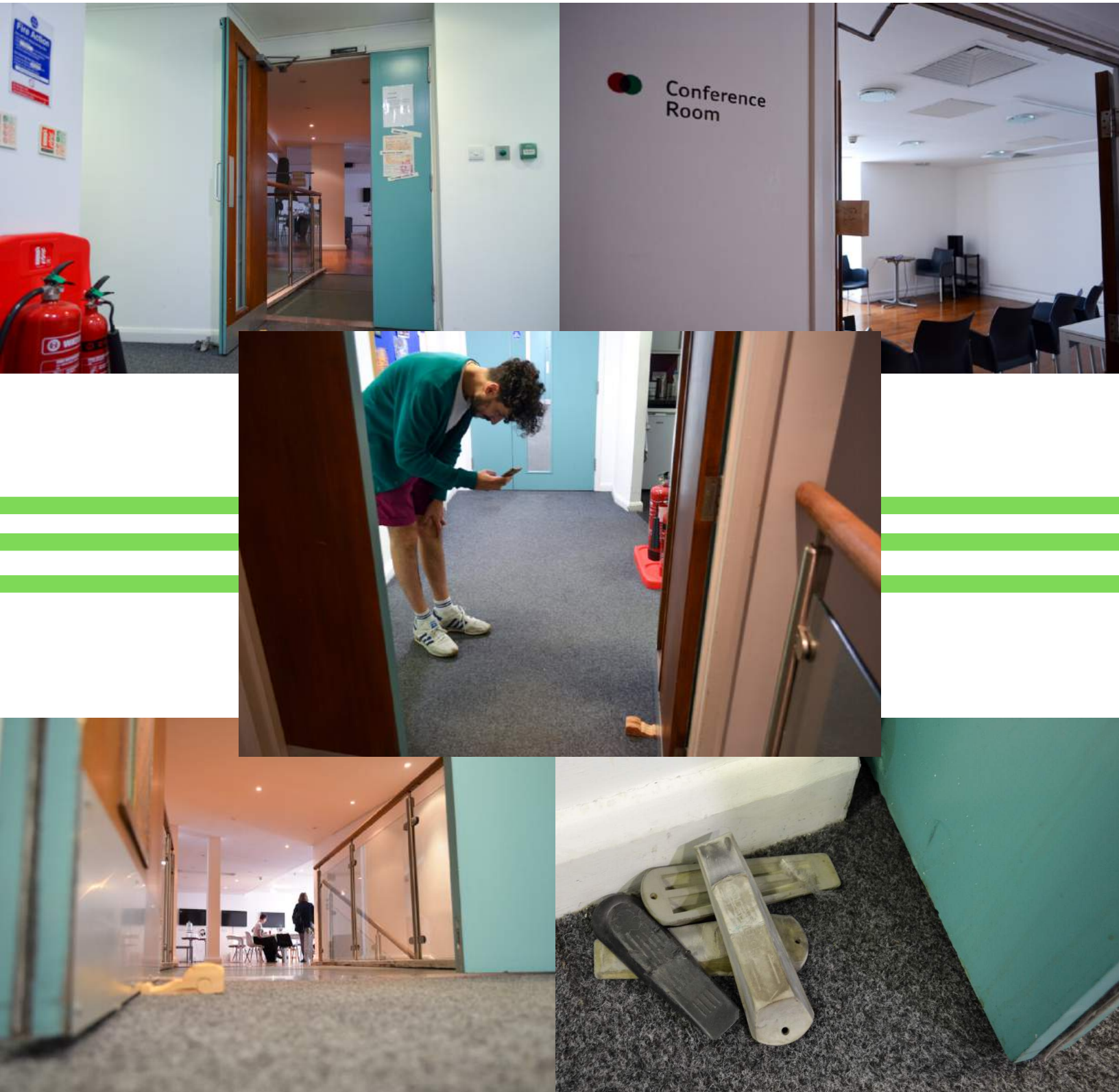
Be Open



Be Honest

HOW CAN WE MAKE PEOPLE
FEEL WELCOME?

"WE NEED TO OPEN THE DOORS!"



Jordi's desperation to see the doors of Lighthouse remain open to the public was inspiring because when doors are open and people are transparent, a barrier gets lifted and people can be open to exploring something new.

DAY 2

Lunch with Ben Messih and Lalibela Ethiopian Kitchen



Today, we spent a lot of time focusing on the layout of the room and the way in which that can create intimacy and comfort for the audiences we invite into our spaces. Prior to being involved on this project, I had never really thought about the image of moving chairs to change the emotional state of a room.

Between us, we realised that a circle of chairs creates a sense of anxiety as you're forced to sit opposite someone whereas a row of chairs can often feel restrictive. We even addressed how it may seem superficial to have a microphone at our lunches but it was the best way to hear from the audiences who wanted to see changes.

Ben spoke a lot about 'navigating (hostile) institutions,' focusing on issues around race and young people.

What stood out for me were the ideas around the long and short term programmes for young people

and how they get used for a short time with little to no pay before being replaced.

As a young person who is interested in the creative industries, it's easy to become disheartened when you hear things like that because it seems like people just want to use you for you to gain experience then do it to someone else rather than support them through to the next step.

Lighthouse are quite good at keeping people involved in the long-term which is evident by the fact that I am doing this report despite it being over a year since I did their youth programme.

However, they are also very good at bringing in new young people to work on projects. This is because they have open sessions or 'public moments' (as Ben would call them) that allows them to be more visible and transparent with the communities they want to reach.

What's for Lunch?



INJERA, GOMEN & MISIR WOT

Top Takeaways

Navigating (Hostile) Institutions

1) Work *with* people not *for* people

It makes the experience much more positive for both of you, giving you more of a reason to go for it with everything you have. Through doing this you create 'allies and friends that support you'. As a young person, this has been crucial for building each other up whilst we hone our creative disciplines. Building an amazing creative community has broadened my horizons and opened the doors for familial collaboration.

2) Having more public moments leads to more visibility

Sadly, this is an honest truth. The more you do the more people recognise you so you're often found throwing yourself into uncomfortable situations. Ultimately it works for the greater good and paves the way for those following after.

3) Survival strategy: knowing the language

Since joining the realm of academia, I've realised how important language is and how knowing the language improves the way in which people perceive you. This tends to put up barriers between people and the arts or any other cultural area. Building your team could be useful here as one can fill in the language gaps that the other can't speak.

4) Listening

The all-important skill ignored by a world that loves to speak first and listen later. When working with children and young

people, in particular, you need to be prepared in listening closely. Listen to the people you wish to reach.

5) Infrastructure

When looking at the spine of the human body, it holds everything up. The bone structure remains the core to keep it all standing. Ben touched upon this thinking about what institutions can invest in that builds people up for the long term. After, listening to what staff and the community want, what's the best way to move forward?

**"WHO ARE
YOU
HOLDING
THE DOOR
OPEN FOR?"**

6) Openness of the physical space

We were only on day 2 of hosting lunches with the doors wide open. As people walked past, there were many intrigued faces looking from the outside in with some people even walking through the door. It's amazing how just keeping a door open is all it takes to bring someone in. Yet, it's a shame that due to the health and safety laws and regulations, it won't always be possible to be physically open for everyone.

But what if being open meant having a space with a closed door?



**"AND SO WE
CREATE
OUR OWN
WORLD."**

- Sue Madden in 14 Radnor Terrace, A
Woman's Place

DAY 3

Tacos with the
Lighthouse
Team & Board



What's for Lunch?

Today we stepped into our community of allyship by putting together a taco for someone else on the Lighthouse team. It was a great way to bring people together and break the ice for those who may not have met each other on the team.

The big question of today's lunch was

"WHAT DOES BEING OPEN MEAN FOR LIGHTHOUSE?"

We started to look at this from the eyes of Matt Weston from Spacemakers and some of the projects he's worked on at New England House.

This brought up the question of 'regeneration without gentrification'. As an organisation that cares about the community around it, we explored ideas around 'outreach' and community-building projects. But it became a question of how do you make it sustainable without pushing something else that pulls people away.

As the team at Lighthouse is quite small, a force towards regeneration would need to protect the mental health and well-being of the staff as well as being open enough to branch out to those that would benefit from the changes.

A solution or note of advice for the future was with 'wise direction', a good pace, then authority and agency.

Open Sessions

The open sessions were the events that drew me to Lighthouse. I enjoyed listening to the story of industry professionals and always walked away feeling inspired in the hope that one day I could be that person talking about creativity and sharing art.

The open sessions are always a two-way exchange for young people in that they can hear someone's story and use it as an opportunity for networking and work-shadowing.

It creates a hub for people to connect with in Brighton. The space can be quite versatile to accommodate multimedia artwork.

Feeling Welcome

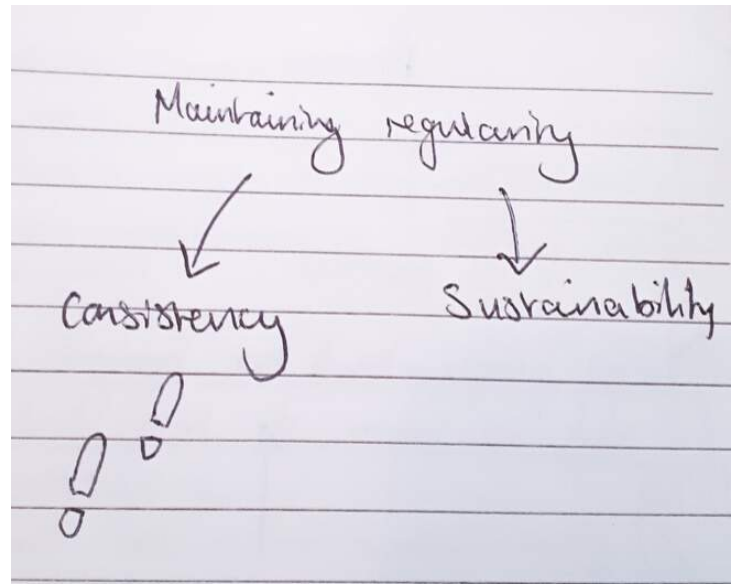
Lighthouse tend to do a good job at making people feel welcome once they are inside the building. The main areas to navigate was *what other doors are they opening* with the projects that they run. For example, with the Viral project, partnering with other companies has enabled young people to venture out into other areas that they may not have experienced. I had the opportunity to go to Love Supreme and be part of the artist liaison team which I'd never even considered as an option.

How do you hold keep the people around who the doors are already open for? how long do you keep the doors open? Will they be open all the time?

Bringing it all back to Ben's talk on finding your allies and speaking the language. The right people will stay and be engaged.

When you close the doors to create safe spaces for communities to be open, vulnerable and themselves, how can you navigate this without appearing exclusive and closed off from the wider community?

This question crossed my mind a lot during the week of lunches. After talking about the impact of having a closed door space for 'feminist women, gender non-binary, lesbian and queer-identified people' in the Devil's Dyke Network to be open where not many other places would allow. It shone some light on other ways of being open which necessarily mean having the front door wide open all the time, but being an organisation that listens and supports communities who seem to have been overlooked. Even if it's just the little things like allowing people to use one of the rooms to experiment with creative projects or develop communities it could have a huge impact in the long term.



DAY 4

Lunch with Viral Alumni
and Brighton Cauldron



Today we had food from Brighton Cauldron - an organisation that supports BME women by giving them the space to create their own communities through making food.

Over lunch we had speakers like myself and other VIRAL alumni discussing how we can use spaces and where the gaps are in the industry for us to explore our craft.

I've broken these down into different questions and specific moments from my experience on the VIRAL programme, to illustrate how much programmes like VIRAL mean for young people.

What did you learn from VIRAL?

As good as Viral is, the thing I loved the most was learning that 'creativity doesn't have to be rigid'. Being the first cohort of young people to try out the programme, we didn't know what to expect, yet because we had amazing mentors who love what they do and have a desire to be creative, that energy filtered down on to the way we approached our projects.

I hadn't experienced anything like this before. Both Art GCSE and my Journalism degree were very structured and institutionalised ways of being creative. So when I came to Viral, I almost didn't know what to do because I had never been given that creative freedom within a community before. This was massively significant because many people don't see creativity beyond the art they are taught at school.

What's for Lunch?



**"CREATIVITY
DOESN'T
HAVE TO BE
RIGID."**





"For some of the other Viralers, they broke into the start of their careers and gained a network of links to professionals in their disciplinary areas."



What opportunities did it open for you?

In terms of opportunities, the way in which Lighthouse partnered with other organisations meant that I could go to Love Supreme jazz festival. I enjoyed it because I was able to experience another side of the music industry that I had never considered.

It was able to open doors into other potential career paths that I hadn't seen before.

For some of the other Viralers, they broke into the start of their careers and gained a network of links to professionals in their disciplinary areas.

What could Lighthouse provide for young people?

Lighthouse is already good for providing a professional community space that supports young creatives outside the music industry. Brighton is very music-focused so as an artist, especially a young artist it's not easy to find a space for you to be welcomed in. It's even more difficult if you aren't at university. So it would be a great place for young people to try new ideas, host workshops and meet like-minded people (all of which Viral did) even if it's just a short-term or one-off. For people who are into film, it would be useful to have a space to screen and reflect on their latest films. Or even have a 3 day pop-up residency for a young emerging artist. It would be great to have a space as a testing ground for our ideas. However, that comes with

Top Takeaways

Filling in the gaps between young people and the industry

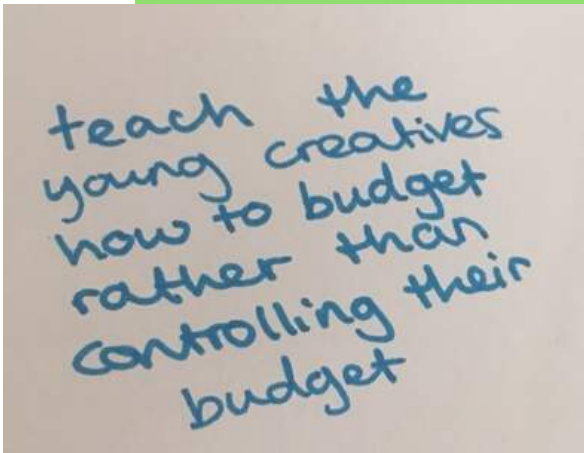
a potential risk in terms of finances and resources. These are the doors that seem to be closed for young people in Brighton.

To be open means more than just opening the doors. It means being there for young people, helping them realise their potential rather than just teaching them.

How do we lift people up as well as ourselves?

Are we trying to be too feel-good? Can we really help everyone? If we can't help everyone how do we choose the ones we can.

We wrapped the tables in paper so people could write their thoughts down as they went along. That gave them the space to say everything they needed. To create without taking the mic and to articulate everything around them.



DAY 5

Lunch with Jamila Prowse,
Amrita Dhallu
and Lerato Foods





Lunch with Jamila and Amrita was focused mainly on the care of artists from a curator's perspective.

Jamila started by opening up about the disconnect between artists and curators and they there should be a realm of understanding before the curation starts.

From her own experience as well as that of the artists around her, she'd seen an increase in artists being commodified rather than cared for. This was due to a lack of understanding and communication from various institutions. The lack of care has come from trialling things out on individuals without knowing if it would work. This

could look like pooling multiple job roles into one with a desire for multi-disciplinary positions to be filled up but it ignores the well-being and openness of people in an honest way.

Similarly to the previous talks, ways to improve the communication between institutions and artists relies on knowing the language. When we find the language, are able to understand and relay it back to the people who need to hear it, paving the way for future artists.

Peer groups and support are other ways that artists can improve their well-being and support during situations

without care.

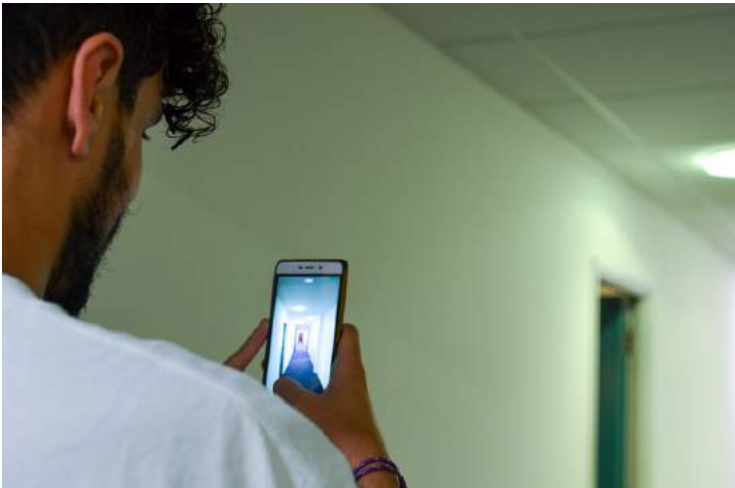
Thinking about who you're putting yourself in front of, what spaces you are walking into and solidifying the networks around you. Whether it's a horizontal network that brings you closer together with fellow creatives or a vertical network that gets you through the door of a welcoming institution.

Institutions need to be communicating better with the communities and people they want to be involved in their programme rather than directing it from what may look good on paper. What practical, healthy solutions are being offered?

LARA ANTOINE

**"WE NEED
SPACES THAT
ALLOW PEOPLE
TO WORK
THROUGH JOY"**





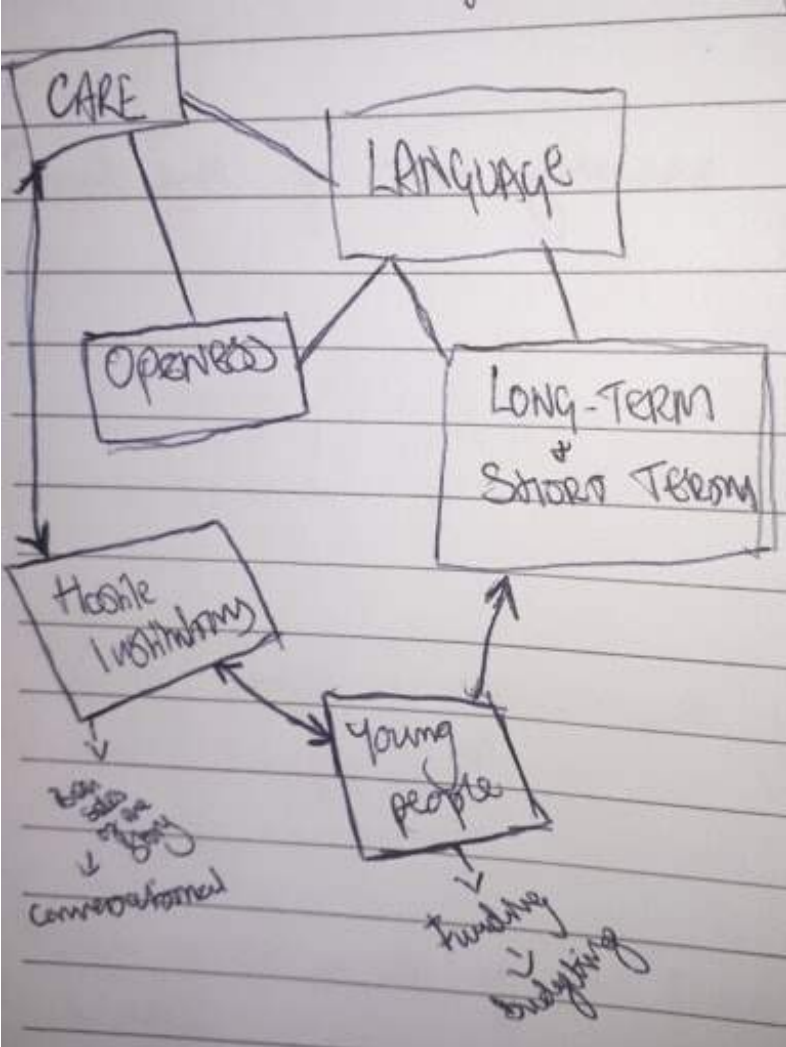


**ALL OF THE
DOORS ARE OPEN**



Final Takeaways

Who is doing the washing up?



Upon reflection, I came away from these talks with a lot of information on where things could improve within my own practice and further institutions that I may enter in to.

The key themes seem to surround openness, care, language, youth and the short/long-term process. So these are the things that we should be thinking about when talking to people about what they want and need in order to improve our openness towards artists and the community.



**"[IT'S ABOUT] GIVING
PEOPLE A ROOM
AND JUST
SEEING WHAT
HAPPENS."**



A MINI-ZINE BY

LARA ANTOINE

CUÑAS, TOPES Y SUJETAPUERTAS



Lara Antoine is a final year Journalism student at the University of Sussex. Founder and editor of online media platform AVRA, Brighton-based artist, Lara explores contemporary culture through mixed media such as video performance, journalism, documentary film and radio. She was also one of the participants on the Viral Programme at Lighthouse in 2018.



LIGHTHOUSE COMMUNAL LUNCHESES - A REPORT

JANUARY 2020

I met Bobby at different events during my time at Lighthouse. I really admire the work he's doing in the city to actively create opportunities for young people. As he came to all three communal lunches (what a great guest!), I wanted to hear more from him about his thoughts on each and asked for his feedback here.

BOBBY BROWN



I was lucky enough to attend all three of the Lighthouse communal lunches in July of 2019. Initially hearing about the programme online, I was intrigued by such a series of events and very glad that they were being held over lunchtime! Each event started with a brief introduction from each of the lead guests. It was an open-forum lunch setting with food provided by a series of chefs for a group made up of a set of diverse and engaged individuals – the next generation of local talent and creative professionals all in conversation amongst each other (in between mouthfuls!)

The lunches were a really well-executed idea that felt somewhat like a family dinner with everyone passing cutlery, experiencing the food and engaging in the conversations. All three of the events really resonated with me. Guest artists included Ben Messih, Jamila Prowse and the Viral* participants.

* Viral is a six month programme run by Lighthouse for young people, designed around the interests and needs of the participants. Participants receive production training, business development, mentoring, showcasing opportunities and peer-to-peer support. The project focuses on a range of disciplines including music, film, photography and design.

Communal lunch #1 – with curator Ben Messih, 17th July 2019

"TRUE CHANGE IN ART INSTITUTIONS ISN'T EVER GOING TO HAPPEN UNTIL IT HAPPENS AT THE TOP."

- Ben Messih

At the first lunch, Ben focused on how to navigate hostile environments (particularly in the art sector, but also applicable far beyond!), speaking about his experience working in a gallery and trying to change the culture from within. Something I can say isn't easy from my personal experience in arts and music.

Communal lunch #2 – with Viral 2018 participants: Community for creative, 18th July 2019

The second talk featured participants of Lighthouse Viral programme. Again, this was another subject that felt particularly relevant for me, having faced difficulties growing up in Brighton, in education and in accessing the creative industries. A large part of my cultural experience in Brighton over the last few years has been down to the programme at Lighthouse – particularly during Elijah's period as Artistic Director, programming events very relevant to my tastes – and



"For me, it's about having a diversity of voices and opinions in the institution — structural racism can present a lot of barriers which manifest themselves in ways which are difficult to pinpoint. If you're trying to change anything you're seen as being very confrontational"

— Ben Messih



"Viral is a project for 16–25 year-olds who want to work in the creative and digital industries, but who don't have the opportunities, facilities and connections they need."

— Lighthouse



"Our practices are based in human contact and interaction. For me to be a good curator I have to look after my artists."

— Jamila Prowse



if I'd have had programmes such as Viral running when I was a teen then identifying my skills and the formative years of my creative career would have been far less strenuous.

I'm really excited about the future of the Viral participants and for the future of the programme in general.

Communal Lunch #3 – with Jamila Prowse and Amrita Dhallu: Does anyone really care? 19th July 2019

The third and final lunch was hosted by the amazing Jamila Prowse, who spoke about care in the arts, and whether institutions care for their employees, artists and audiences – another subject very close to my heart and something I've increased my passion for over the last few years since further exploring the arts sector in Brighton and beyond!

I first met Jamila at Lighthouse when she was project manager for the Last Dance programme.

Like Elijah, Jamila and her tastes were something I felt I could relate to

, having experienced invisible barriers to entry and cultural conflict whilst confronting institutions on their practice.

Beyond the communal lunches, I've had great joy collaborating with Lighthouse on an Open Session and workshop with writer, DJ and cultural documenter Emma Warren; working in partnership with musician Bex Fidler to facilitate the talk at Lighthouse whilst also delivering a workshop for underserved young people in the Hangleton & Knoll area of Brighton – to great success. The workshop with Emma quickly inspired a series of writings and speeches from young people – empowering them to tell their own stories with confidence.

I believe Lighthouse is making a true and valiant effort to offer its programme citywide and allow its offering beyond the four walls of the building whilst inviting and continuing their attempt to make Lighthouse a diverse, welcoming and engaging space for creatives of all ages, from all walks of life.

Bobby Brown started his career by creating Tésty, a streetwear brand that would soon bring him to work with music artists Rizzle Kicks and Hobbie Stuart. This became a pathway towards managing singer/songwriter Elli Ingram who would later sign to Island Records and collaborate with Chase & Status and Jordan Rakei. Bobby continues to work in the music industry as an artist manager, managing Karl Benjamin (recently signed to Atlantic Records) and rap duo Frankie Stew & Harvey Gunn. He is heavily involved in the local community arts scenes and is a trustee for local charity, Audio Active, local Radio station Platform B and theatre company Brighton People's Theatre.

NO OPERATIONS, NO RE-IMAGINING

DECEMBER 2019

During my residency at Lighthouse, Emma Wickham became a very important person to me. Emma's role as Head of Operations is to look after the building and everyone in it, as well as making sure that the ambitions and desires of the programme, the Board, the team, the tenants and the people hiring the spaces can be realised on time, on budget and safely. When asking 'Who's doing the washing up?', Emma knows the answer and is responsible for it happening. Emma and I talked a lot over my months at Lighthouse about the crucial role of operations in re-imagining, the continual care and attention involved in maintenance and why no one can ever remember the name of the cleaners.

I asked Emma to share some thoughts after my residency, in conversation with Connor Clark, Operations and Events Assistant. Selfishly, this was in part so that I could have another opportunity to learn from her perspective on making things happen, but more so that the operations work — which is so often referred to as 'behind the scenes' or 'back of house' work — could be brought to the front in our institutional re-imagining.

EMMA WICKHAM, HEAD OF OPERATIONS, AND
CONNOR CLARK, OPERATIONS AND EVENTS ASSISTANT
LIGHTHOUSE

EVA: How you see operations in relation to the idea of 're-imagining'?

The Operations team are there to think about how the re-imagining could happen practically and advise on limitations – who will do it, how long will it take, how many people, is it safe etc. We try to include operations early on in a project, so that we are doing our best to make sure we are properly resourced team-wise and planned tech-wise – to make sure all the nuts and bolts are thought of, that there is enough time around things, and the humans running the nuts and bolts are getting enough support, are safe and are also having adequate rest.

We all know it is so important and goes hand in hand with planning a project or a re-imagining but it's hard to quantify sometimes. There will always be times

when you think: 'oh crikey we need more time or more people' as humans have a problem with knowing how long things take, like wrapping Christmas presents – it always takes three hours longer than you think 😊

Operations is also front line and will be communicating the work to the public and all visitors face to face. It is out there all the time listening and talking to

the audience – a kind of gauge of public opinions and needs – and can pick up messages or issues quickly and relay it back into the team. And that's another important reason

Operations should be included early on in planning things, as we are going to be the voice of it.

So basically 'no operations: no reimagining':-)

We are a small team and everyone has a bit of a part to play in Operations, so we are lucky in that we all understand and respect it.

EVA: Emma, you were at Lighthouse during my residency and Con, you started at Lighthouse afterwards. I'm interested to know what came from asking the question 'who's doing the washing up? And where's the sink?'

I'd say the big thing was a change in vibe within the team through asking the question over a period of time and it seeping in and the question being championed by you Eva (that bit is important). It led to a great feeling of pride in our work and a boost to team morale. Through asking the question, we thought about and respected ours and others' everyday work/tasks and every person that goes in to making that task happen... and this came over time. This has been a very positive change and our language around our work tasks has definitely changed since. Talking about certain tasks as boring or a chore is now a rarity. I personally now, when explaining an admin or operations task, will sing highly of the importance of it (with an Eva champion icon in my head)

– whatever that task is. It really helps towards feeling you are part of something worthwhile and you are all working together toward a positive goal – and that’s priceless really.

What also struck me was how this programme was different in that it was asking questions not only from within but out loud to the public, about how we are working or how we are feeling and how we would like to improve or change. And in that way, it felt inclusive and honest.

We are looking at how we can connect

and open up more and we are doing some lunches please come along’ was one of the most positive messages I’ve had the pleasure of saying :-). It has helped in talking to the outside world about what we in the Operations team do and why it is vital and important. There was also great pride and a feeling of worthwhileness on hearing what we might have done right from a community that needed us. To know what we can do to help a community was, and is, incredibly powerful and motivating in a time of closed doors, funding cuts and challenges with wellbeing in society.



Here's a list of other positive steps/outcomes/thoughts I jotted down as a result of, and since, Who's doing the washing up:

- Connor is currently working on an accessibility document to go on our website to include information about how we are working towards being a safe, inclusive space (also worked on by Elia Habib, Lighthouse Programme Intern) – and what that means.
- We are working toward improving the signage for our toilets to allow for better messaging and avoid male/female only signs. We're looking at gender-neutral messaging and we have clearer temporary signage for a single-occupancy, accessible cubicle that can be used by anyone.
- Plants make a friendly/caring/nurturing space and we want more more more.
- Invite people to eat food with you and they will come to your event and feel included – it eases communications.
- Vera from local charity Food and Friendship said she felt very inspired by being in a space with creative young people; it made her feel good about the future as it's something she would not normally see, or be invited to.



- Eva set an excellent example in thanking everyone, absolutely everyone.
- Inspired by the communal lunches during Jordi's week, we now organise catering for our room hires through a local homeless charity.
- We now have regular communal lunch events with the tenants – plus we know we must also have food there (cheeseboard... with vegan and gluten-free options) to encourage tenants to join.

How do we start to open these up to other people?

- Devil's Dyke Network has run a very successful full-day festival here built on the notion of wanting to create the communal lunch vibe plus a reading area corner as we created when Aliyah Hussain and aNNA Bunting Branch's 'Potential Wor(l)ds' workshops were going on (they had a great time and also spent a lot on the bar which was good for us commercially).
- We all (the whole team) now have a stint on the front desk when we run an exhibition to make sure we are connecting with the public and also sitting within the space itself and seeing how it works together... through this, we have improved our feedback area and have a reading section (like Potential Wor(l)ds) so our feedback numbers have increased hugely through creating this welcome space... plus most recently it was Elia's idea to also have tea and biscuits in the feedback reading zone which was a great success.
- It's important to ask questions of ourselves as quite often things are happening and it's because it has always been like that – especially in the Operations team. It helps to have an outside person look inside and give a different perspective.
- Team pride in administration – acknowledging the importance of these everyday tasks.
- The difficult balance of the absolute need to open our doors and arms so we can provide a space for the community and help them, especially as other spaces are closing down, versus protection of our team and their time plus income from commercial activity and maintaining a community-focused non-profit status – as we don't have the resources to be the 'always open' space.
- Doorstops can be beautiful objects :)

- Inviting the tenants and colleagues for lunch spreads a feeling of goodwill and improves relations all round, and makes more difficult situations (things breaking, maintenance issues) easier to handle as the relationships are closer.

And what are the questions still left to ask...?

- Who is doing the washing up and do they know why they are doing the washing up? Are our stories of success in our programming and social impact, learnings etc. fed back to everyone involved?
- Do washer-uppers have a way to feed-back and input on things?
- Who is doing the putting away and have we really understood how long it takes to do the washing up?
- Is the language being used clear to all?
- Your audience is also your team: how do we make sure that conversations and thoughts, re-imaginings become actions and are actioned as part of our overall strategy?
- How do our out-of-hours freelancers (who are super lovely people who align with Lighthouse's values) really know what these values are?
- How can we keep listening to what is needed? What information do we actually need to be gathering from our feedback forms?
- What did we each learn from opening the door?

Emma Wickham is Head of Operations and joined Lighthouse as Administrator in 2005. Emma leads on venue and commercial development, oversees the smooth running of the office and venue, manages the Operations team and oversees event management and project support for all Lighthouse activities. She also supports the Executive Director with fundraising, board and stakeholder liaison and general organisational management. Emma is a graduate in Graphic Art & Illustration and an expert doodler. In her previous roles at Lighthouse, she carried out marketing, print design and all of the organisation's administration. She is the heart and soul of Lighthouse and can often be found providing the warmest welcome in Brighton to all guests, visitors, audiences, colleagues and tenants at Lighthouse.



**"WHO IS DOING THE
WASHING UP AND DO
THEY KNOW WHY
THEY ARE DOING THE
WASHING UP?"**

Connor Clark works alongside Emma in assisting the Operations and Events at Lighthouse. Master of multitasking, he helps manage a vast range of events from organising room hire bookings to setting up and facilitating both commercial and in-house events as part of the artistic programme. Always happy to help in his front-facing role, you'll find him meeting and greeting all of Lighthouse's clients and visitors. Connor is a BA Media Practice graduate from the University of Sussex with a fascination for the sonic medium including podcasts, soundscapes and really great techno. His work has been presented on radio platforms such as London's Resonance FM and Sussex's URF, and he continues to work with artists on podcasts and film projects. During his time working at Sussex Students' Union, he developed an appreciation and understanding of working for a not-for-profit organisation and continues his career working across the charity arts and events sector.

DOES ANYONE REALLY CARE? LEARNING HOW TO SUSTAIN A PRACTICE IN THE ARTS AND SURVIVE

JANUARY 2020

When Jordi and I were planning the communal lunches during his residency at Lighthouse we wanted to invite external guests to hold a conversation over lunch which began with their own response to what 'opening up' meant for them in their different roles as curators, organisers, institutional workers, artists. At the first lunch, Ben Messih (Heritage Education Manager at South London Gallery) presented ten strategies for navigating [hostile] institutions. At the second lunch, artists, writers and music producers Lara Antoine, Saygal Yusuf, Boudicca and Chanel Stephens shared how Lighthouse could open-up to create longer-term opportunities for young people. For the final lunch, we invited curator and writer Jamila Prowse who invited curator Amrita Dhallu to join her, and the lunch was cooked by Brighton-based caterers Lerato Foods.

I'd been introduced to Jamila's work at the start of my time at Lighthouse. Before even meeting her, I became more and more in awe of the honest way she shared her practice, experiences and views of working as a young curator, navigating institutional spaces as a woman of colour and the effects of overworking on her mental health.



JAMILA PROWSE



At a time of constantly hearing 'opening up' as a methodology for arts organisations to become more inclusive, accessible, diverse and welcoming of 'hard to reach' audiences... I found Jamila was asking different questions: who is deciding what this 'opening up' looks like and for whom? Why does the conversation about how to be more accessible always feel like the answers are already written before the questions are even asked? And does anyone in these institutions actually really care or want to take responsibility for the difficult conversations and organisational (and personal) self-reflections which come from genuinely changing the way we think about access and inclusivity?

Jamila and Amrita used their lunch to focus on how to care and hold space for colleagues, participants, audiences, colleagues and conversations in the ripples which spread out from these questions. Their lunch gathered a group of more than twenty people and lasted for almost three hours (no one wanted to leave!). Jamila and Amrita worked through different constellations of care they had personally experienced to propose strategies of caring for collaborators, friends, other workers, and look after our own mental health when we start asking the questions in our institutions which no one else is asking.

In May 2019, having worked part-time and freelance across different admin, production and curatorial roles in the arts for two years, I was forced to stop working as a result of my mental health. I had had ongoing mental health issues for most of my adolescence and at the age of twenty-four, having lived independently since leaving for university six years earlier, for the first time in my working life I had to properly rethink the ways I support myself.

Graduating from a BA in Art History in 2017, I left my studies with experience in a number of art roles including volunteering at a local gallery, doing admin and events placements and a curatorial training residency. I had an awareness at university that as someone from a low-income background, I would not have the financial support or stability to work for free upon graduating. This meant I was constantly grafting and looking for opportunities to strengthen my chances of getting paid work following graduation. During this time, as a creative outlet, I also launched and ran a print magazine with friends called 'Typical Girls'. The skills I had the fortune of honing meant that when I graduated in May 2017, I undertook freelance roles supporting a visual arts festival before landing my first job as a project manager at Lighthouse.

My first job was a fixed-term, yearlong position, supporting a programme called

Last Dance. Within this role, I was trained in production and management across a breadth of different projects from regular talks to film screenings, exhibitions and a podcast and short film series. At the end of the year, I felt I had learnt a huge amount in a short time and that I was well equipped to enter into the working world with renewed energy and confidence. Yet what I was met with upon leaving Lighthouse was the reality of the precarious state of the arts. With an influx of part-time and temporary roles, I quickly found I had to cobble together whatever work I could find to make ends meet. Having moved to London, surviving financially proved to be challenging.

Simultaneously, with an ambition to curate exhibitions and creatively input into the cultural landscape, I found the only way to do this was to work independently and on a freelance basis. Applying for curatorial roles in London a year after graduating, I was told time and time again that I was under-qualified. Meanwhile, whenever I went for curatorial training roles I was turned down on the basis of having too much experience. Even so, in February 2019 I responded to an open call for emerging curators and I succeeded which allowed me to independently curate my first show – something I found challenging and incredibly rewarding.

It was a few months later, during the time I was working for an arts organisation

part-time as an assistant producer, and undertaking another freelance curatorial position putting on an exhibition in London, that my mental health significantly worsened. Though I was already familiar with ongoing experiences of general anxiety and depression, in the spring of 2019 I had a period of worsened and prolonged panic attacks, the result of which left me signed off from work by my GP. Across the course of the next six months, I would be signed off at different points by my GP, leading me to eventually leave my place of work.

The photo from my Instagram is the first time I explicitly spoke about my mental health in relation to work on social media. During a period where I had

continually been promoting upcoming work, I felt that I wanted to demystify some of the expectations around working in the arts. It was important to me to establish a level of transparency around the ways that we manage as arts professionals: to reveal that while we may often appear to be in a run of success and achievement, the reality can be quite different.

Ultimately, I wanted to express that trying to sustain a working practice in the arts, while also looking after ourselves, is greatly challenging. It was this post which lay the groundwork for the talk and communal lunch at Lighthouse in July 2019, Does Anyone Really Care, in which curator Amrita Dhallu and I talked through our own



jamilaprowse In between the relentless posting of promo for the show tomorrow, for full disclosure I spent the morning on day 3 of install sitting in a doctors surgery covered in an odd rash. As it's mental health awareness week I wanted to demystify the endless stream of highlights that I regularly partake in on Instagram. Constantly being in dialogue around your mental health can be exhausting - particularly when it's something you battle daily - but it's also misleading and detrimental to allow the facade we create online to distract from the reality that all of us struggle. Over the course of this year I've been the closest to my professional aims than I've ever been, but have simultaneously had the worst mental health I've had in years. I've battled with PTSD, anxiety and depression for the past 5+ years, and when work is at its busiest I can often get knocked out for days at a time by panic attacks, cyclical thoughts and at my worst agoraphobia. Having mental health difficulties doesn't mean that you are unable to achieve your goals and be successful. For me, what it has done is completely redefined what I perceive as success. Getting out of bed in the morning, making sure I eat dinner, having a conversation with someone, leaving the house, can feel like as much of an achievement as more externally regarded milestones. Often my mental health can feel like a restriction, but in other ways I regard it as a strength; it's made me more conscious of what my body and mind need and has forced me to listen to it regardless of what's going on in my life, it's made me more empathetic and perceptive to

experiences of working in the arts. The impact that precarious working can have on health acted as a jumping-off point to talk about manageability, expectations and access in the arts over the wider branch of thinking about care.

Below are some of the things I learnt from this process and talk...

Building support systems for artists and arts professionals

One aspect of working independently or freelance is that it can be largely isolating. Not being a part of a wider team can mean that you often end up working alone, without networks and support systems around you. If you didn't go down the route of higher education

into your chosen field, this can often mean a lack of a cohort of peers working in similar fields to you. Finding and nurturing support groups, then, can be an invaluable way to talk through your experiences, to have a sounding board when you are unsure of something and to find commonalities between what you and others are going through. This is something I learnt through Amrita who founded a peer forum of artists, curators, writers and thinkers who focus on the site of the body carrying histories and trauma, supported by Camden Arts Centre. This was reiterated for me by artist Raquel Meseguer who founded Unchartered Collective as a group of artists working with chronic pain, which started as a meet-up of three people over a cup of tea.

**"TRYING TO SUSTAIN A
WORKING PRACTICE IN
THE ARTS...IS GREATLY
CHALLENGING."**

What has become apparent to me is that meeting up with other artists and curators, no matter how informal, can be one of the most invaluable aspects of sustaining a practice.

Focusing on input not output

Alongside a consideration of the need for support systems, one thing the talk at Lighthouse helped me discover is that sometimes focusing on input as opposed to output is important as a curator or artist. Over the years, I had placed an increased pressure on myself to put on a steady stream of exhibitions, so as to prove that I could sustain a working practice. Yet that increased pressure was one of the impacting factors on my deterioration of health: something which proved greatly unsustainable in itself. Hosting a talk at Lighthouse with Amrita showed me the importance of curating in ways that are not focused on heavy production and a prolonged time commitment: that curating can also be about the way we support and build dialogue, whether through conversation in a room, online or in writing. As a curator, I see one of the main focuses of my work as supporting artists to create. Putting on exhibitions is not the only way to do that.

The informal relationships you build with other artists and arts professionals are as much a part of sustaining a practice as the visible modes or outputs which sit in the public realm. It's the talks, conversations and moments which aren't quantifiable but contribute in such impactful ways to our thinking, which have ended up being the most rewarding part of my own practice, while also being an aspect I can invest time in without it having a detrimental effect on my health.

How we communicate

As an arts professional, one of the fundamental aspects of my job is communicating with other people. I have been trained to do this in specific ways: starting conversations via email (including large quantities of information in the body of an email) then offering to follow up with a phone call, before eventually meeting up with someone in person. By and large, arts professionals take this mode of communication for granted, as the baseline of how to get things done. If a person has any specific access needs, which mean they do not best communicate through these methods, the responsibility falls on them to have the confidence and reassurance to express this. One thing I am learning

is that if we start a conversation from the point of asking “how do you best communicate?” and “what are your access needs?”, we can find better ways of working with each other and alleviate the pressure on an individual to communicate what they need in order to sustain a working practice.

Access Rider: Open resource documents

I am still learning about how best to work in the arts as someone with ongoing mental health conditions. I, too, am learning the best way to support disabled artists and artists with ongoing health concerns and access needs. Some of the resources I have found useful are outlined below:

[Access Docs for Artists](#) is an open resource for disabled artists, created by [Leah Clements](#), [Alice Hattrick](#) and Lizzy Rose. An access doc, or access ‘rider’

is a document that outlines your disability access needs. The online resource document outlines what an access doc is, includes examples of access docs used by real artists, and information on how you can go about creating your own.

[@Invalid__Art](#) is an Instagram account run by Mary, sharing useful information around intersectional anti-racist disability rights. Mary and artist [Bella Milroy](#) created a resource around Disability inclusive communications. The post, which can be found [here](#), includes information around disability inclusive email signatures.

Artist [Evan Ifekoya](#) shared an [Instagram post](#) around standardised practice in the arts. The post made me think about the processes and expectations we internalise as arts professionals, and how these can be limiting or unrealistic for artists.

Jamila Prowse is an independent curator, writer and editor, aiming to develop new dialogues around identity and well-being within the visual arts. Recent projects include 'Dancing in Peckham', a group show of moving image and photography exploring dance as a unifying practice, Peckham 24 (Peckham, London, UK, May 2019); MOVE, a solo exhibition by Ronan Mckenzie exploring the multiplicity of black womanhood through dance, 1-1 in Basel (Switzerland, March 2019); 'Reflections of Us', a curatorial training programme for BAME people aged 16-25, Brighton Photo Fringe (Brighton, UK, October 2018).



A CONVERSATION AFTER THE END: WHO'S DRYING THE DISHES?

DECEMBER 2019

Alli Beddoes, CEO and Artistic Director of Lighthouse, and Matt Weston, Co-Director of Brighton-based utopian regeneration agency Spacemakers, reflect on the 'after-effects' of the Who's doing the washing up? programme at Lighthouse. In a conversation recorded five months after the end of the programme, they discuss how an organisation might deal with leftovers of a project after a guest curator or artist has come and gone. Specifically, they focus on what shifted in Lighthouse's thinking about the concept of open-ness following the communal lunches during Jordi Ferreiro's residency 'Cuñas, topes y sujetapuertas / doorstops, wedges and holding space' which was developed through conversations with Matt.

ALLI BEDDOES AND MATT WESTON



ALLI: I was really keen to talk about the legacy of Eva's programme and her residency at Lighthouse. It was incredibly valuable for all of us, our team, tenants and audience but what stands out to me is how we have carried her work forwards. Once a guest in your home or in this case a curator in our space has left the room and the washing up is done and the dishes are dried... there is the packing away. So our conversation is about how things continue and have a life afterwards.

It's really important to hold this legacy because when planning projects like Viral [our youth programme], there's always a start, middle and an end. That end can feel quite abrupt. But with other projects, like Eva's, we've been able to take things on in-house – the 'drying up' after the washing up.

MATT: Yes, it's like what's still burning? With our projects at Spacemakers, it often ends up in a finished product, like a magazine or a bit of furniture. It's finished, it's sold, it's gone, but some element of it is still burning whether it's the idea or the culture created or something physical still being used.

ALLI: Well, let's run with the analogy for a bit – you could just leave the washing up on the side... and what kind of welcome is that for the next guest? Not a great way to welcome them. There's the next step we need to think about: working out what goes on

MATT: And do you put it back to how it was before? There is something in the 'drying up' which implies you have to put it back to what it was before. But, it's not re-setting, it's closing the loop on a project ready for the next cycle.

Coming back to the communal lunches during Jordi's residency, were there specific things from those conversations which have shifted your thinking about what 'opening up' means for Lighthouse?

ALLI: Lighthouse was never built as an open public institution; it was the local newspaper's printing house. I think the building has a hard time trying to be a public space. It has a hard time from audiences and people who hire the space, a hard time from the people who work here, and from my predecessors who have hosted exhibitions in this space. I think if Lighthouse could talk it would whisper: "I can't actually do this! I was never built for this!"

So Jordi and Eva's lunches enabled us to work with what we've got. We were previously having conversations about how we could make this building more open, but it was a long-term architectural vision to change the physical structure of the space. There's a lot of the building that isn't being used very well – or even at all in places. There is a lot of the building that doesn't work very well for us

in places, the acoustics in the reception space aren't good for talks or sound works.

But Jordi's residency empowered us to think about how we can change the way we think about using the building – as we have it now – in order for it to be more open. We were able to understand and articulate how having closed-off spaces could enable other organisations and groups to have a space to work and develop their own ideas. That's a different way of opening the space. And it's, perhaps, actually a strength of the building design here.

MATT: One of the most interesting things for me that week was the tension of asking 'how do you make it more public?' The week was all about 'public-ness' but it's interesting to think about how you can open up by creating closed spaces. You were talking about this at one of the lunches: for all this outreach work about bringing audiences

in, we also need to think about the people working here. And the importance of 'in reach' as well as 'outreach'.

It's not just about open-ness but how to make the organisation accessible, so it's important to do closed things and semi-closed things. As, if we open the whole thing up, it becomes a public space that actually is only public for some people.

ALLI: I don't know if everybody realised this but when Jordi opened every single door in the building for one of the lunchtime talks, our Head of Operations Emma had to sit outside 'the back' of our building for the entire four hours that all the doors were open. She didn't mind, because she is brilliant and fully supportive of Jordi's project and the work Eva was doing, she understood it was testing out what was possible. So in doing little tests like this, these had ripple effects in how opening up actually works in practice and how if the building can't do it efficiently then a human has to physically be there doing it.

MATT: We tend to think about opening up architecturally, like knocking down a front wall. But what do you have to do open up culturally? What does that mean? And how do you do that? There are the architectural structures, and then there are also the organisational structures of 'who's making the tea?' or 'who's working here?'

ALLI: We've had quite a massive change in the team since then, everyone at Lighthouse has their own practices and interests outside of their work at Lighthouse. And now I very clearly let the team know they can use this space for their own creative investigations. We've had conversations about how difficult it is to get a job in the creative industries, let alone in Brighton, so one staff member wants to have a kind of open space for



people looking for creative jobs in Sussex to talk about writing CVs or job applications and have a support network.

MATT: That's a great idea – to make accessible what you do have.

ALLI: And it also shifts the conversations beyond just what jobs we have and puts value on us and our needs and interests as people and as audiences too.

MATT: I think it worked really well bringing the Board to one of the lunches. Even though it was a bit weird and awkward, it was productive to have staff, the young people from Viral, and the Board all in one conversation.

ALLI: We've had a couple of residencies in the space since then too. During one recent artist residency, we had an open day at the end, so I made sure we asked every person coming in about the building and how we can make it better. It's about inviting people in to think about a work or an idea – but also about the building and how we can make it serve its audience better, or with more consideration.

MATT: And so it's not just asking visitors about the programme, which is the typical feedback question, but asking what they think about the building. Some things people say about a building might be things that you

could solve organisationally. For example, if a group would like access to their own space, you could think about fundraising to change the architecture or you could just change the way the leases for renting workspace work.

ALLI: And by getting our programme team to talk to visitors about their experiences of the building, it stops this weird organisational hierarchy of the curatorial programme being more shiny and important than building management and operations.

"WE TEND TO THINK ABOUT OPENING UP ARCHITECTURALLY, LIKE KNOCKING DOWN A FRONT WALL. BUT WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DO TO OPEN UP CULTURALLY?"

MATT: I think it's about asking what's slack in this building that you could make available? And how you can use the budget you have to redirect it in a resourceful way.

How are you thinking about architectural plans for Lighthouse now?

ALLI: Architectural plans require energy, planning and money! We are still thinking and planning, but the attention has changed. We are making sure our plans will always be in conversation and in collaboration with the people who we want to use Lighthouse, as well as the people working here, who are really influential in how we think about access and inclusion.

MATT: It's easy to plough on with an architect or designer to fix the obvious things, but you might still not be dealing with the roots of the problem. And in a building, which wasn't designed for public use, how can you re-purpose it to become a public, open space? It sounds like the conversations at the lunches mean you're now negotiating or thinking about the building's development with those people in your head, and a clearer idea of who you're doing it for.

How do you think short-term residencies can feed into longer-term plans and ambitions for Lighthouse? And how do we make the planning more transparent?

ALLI: The main question for the lunches was 'we know Lighthouse isn't open, so how can we make it open?' And it's so important to be open and to be hearing what other people understand the term of 'open', but for me it's the next bit which is crucial – that's the drying up, isn't it?

It's about making sure that those connecting conversations afterwards happen and that we activate the things that are possible. Being open to change.

MATT: What if the next Board meeting was open and people were able to listen-in? Obviously there are massive problems with that. But that feels like it could be radical? That could be another form of open-ness.

There is also the question of what do you still need to figure out? I think it's quite easy at the end of these projects to report on what changed, what happened. But it's more interesting to ask what is still nagging? What didn't it do? What still needs to happen?

ALLI: Wow, that would be really interesting to open up the Board meetings.

There are always going to be things that we need to figure out. That thing that nags me most of all is about how we action things. We have important conversations about inclusion and accessibility, for example, which have really informed how we put that into our policy but how do we communicate that widely to the people for whom it has a true effect? I am conscious of good intentions, but it's about making sure that these things actually happen – and if they don't happen there is a good reason why not.

MATT: It's also interesting to give



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permission to your staff to start thinking about these things, to empower and include them to make changes in the structure.

And celebrating and embedding that now as part of your organisational 'code', just as a physical extension to the building would be.

You could also make the lunches – for example – a regular habit.

ALLI: To have a carbon copy of those lunches requires money. But we can be creative with what we have got – we could do things like shift some of our evening open sessions to lunchtime, to gather and maintain that daytime audience. This could work quite well in the summer. Our tenants at Lighthouse have continued the monthly lunches, they present their work and projects to the rest of the tenants and it's lovely to have that opportunity to be together and share.

MATT: I think the money is interesting. At the lunches, there was money coming in from Creative Europe to pay for people's time, and smaller but still significant amounts paying for food and costs. So a temporary economy existed. But what's the longer-term or everyday economy of the building? I mean that in terms of what rent people pay, what rates people pay, what service charges people pay, what room hire people pay. But also what do people exchange? So it's about looking at the economy of the

building rather than just the financial transactions. If you've got a staff member who uses the building and gets extra benefits, then what's that worth to them?

I think all of that could be up for play. So, for example, if everybody in the building paid ten pounds to be a member of the building and then you opened that up to the outside. How can you create new economics for the organisation? And how could the money be re-distributed? Could that go into Viral or the programme? You don't actually have to knock any walls down, but add some spreadsheet columns together.

I think it's also helpful to think about what gaps this questioning exposed? And what bits did we end up defending? The most interesting for me was when you were defending your staff and needing to protect their time and energy when everyone is demanding the programme and building be more open.

ALLI: I had quite a tricky conversation after that. It was with a person who had only attended that one lunch, so had missed out on all of the other conversations we had that week and up to that point. They said: 'we thought you wanted Lighthouse to be open! Has something changed?'

It hadn't changed of course. Inviting Eva to re-present the work she had done at Bergen Kunsthall and in particular having Jordi work with our building was

precisely because we need to be open. But in that moment, I felt like it was incredibly important to defend the staff and their energy, and to perhaps defend why Lighthouse isn't always seen as open. I needed the people in the room to hear that I was not expecting them to do any of this for free and that I value them and their time. It feels like such a contradiction to constantly remind ourselves that creative needs come with a need for money to support it. Our creative space is sacred, and yet it isn't really. It's precious – but it shouldn't be. We work alone and we do things together. We are brave and scared. I wanted to quote the author Elizabeth Gilbert as she says something that has really stayed with me – make space for all these paradoxes to be equally true,

and I promise you can make anything. And sometimes in challenging or difficult ways. I'm learning to embrace that, no matter how difficult they are to hear. I also think I probably should have more of a public voice at some point in those lunches.

MATT: I think you shouldn't change what you're saying. You have to be able to share workings out in progress. You were also balancing the arguments, which is really useful. It's not as simple as open/closed – make space for all these paradoxes to be equally true, and I promise you can make anything. we need to work out what open and closed mean. It's not being self-critical; it's about going towards the question of where are the gaps in this? And what happens next?

Alli Beddoes leads the artistic and strategic vision and programme for Lighthouse, with a focus on representing an inspiring and challenging range of voices and art forms in art, technology and society. Alli has more than 15 years of experience working with leading contemporary artists. Before joining Lighthouse, Alli worked at the cultural placemaking agency Futurecity as Head of Arts & Commissioning where she wrote cultural and public art strategies as well as producing a programme of temporary and permanent commissions across the globe with artists including Ryan Gander, teamLab, Random International, Richard Wentworth and Helen Marten.

Matt Weston is a director at Spacemakers, a utopian regeneration group based in Brighton, London and Stockholm. He has ten years' experience working in the built environment, and his work has been exhibited at the V&A and the Barbican. He recently took on the job of strategy lead for the world's largest council housing estate (the Becontree, in Dagenham, London, UK), and is working with Turner Prize winners, Assemble, on a project to regenerate New England House in Brighton, UK.

END NOTES

Who's doing the washing up? was a programme of artist commissions and residencies at Bergen Kunsthall (Bergen, Norway) and Lighthouse (Brighton, UK) between January 2018 and July 2019 supported by Re-Imagine Europe, co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

Re-Imagine Europe is a four-year project presented by ten cultural organisations from across Europe, with an aim to respond to technological advances continue to change the ways that we interact and urge us to explore new modes of operation. Coordinated by Paradiso (NL) in collaboration with Elevate Festival (AT), Lighthouse (UK), Ina GRM (FR), Kontejner (HR), Landmark - Bergen Kunsthall (NO), A4 (SK), Disruption Network Lab (DE) and Ràdio Web MACBA (ES). Former partners include SPEKTRUM (DE) and Student Centre Zagreb / Izlog Festival (HR).

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