

Painting 3

# Sustaining your practice



## Level HE6 – 40 CATS

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Cover image: Sam Gillam, *Light Depth*, 1969 (acrylic on canvas)

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# Introduction

*“The studio is a laboratory, not a factory. An exhibition is the result of your experiments, but the process is never-ending. So an exhibition is not a conclusion.”*

(Chris Ofili, [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/jan/16/chris-ofili-gary-young-interview](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/jan/16/chris-ofili-gary-young-interview))

It is important to notice from the outset that the title of this course is ‘Sustaining your Practice’. The title isn’t ‘Putting on your Degree Show’, for example, instead it suggests something which will continue to be of use well after graduation. This course is about spending time working out how you are going to take your studio practice out into the world on your own terms, and what the creative potential is for that. It is about considering your practice in the round; working out how you might like to continue to practice post degree and what you might need. You have the rest of your life to carry on making art, and this course is about equipping yourself more holistically for that journey, whatever form that takes.

A studio, a continually evolving art practice, a better understanding of the function of engagement and display, a community of peers, gallery contacts and confidence in yourself as an artist in the world, all these are topics you will consider. A toolkit for sustaining your practice will be built from this period of reflection and critical investigation of the creative possibilities for making your work available to someone else to view.

You spent *Major Project* and *Contextual Studies* putting your practice under the microscope and you have undoubtedly taken risks, experienced failure and doubt, worked incredibly hard and achieved some real breakthroughs. You have been given intense personal support from two tutors to help you achieve a major body of work and a significant body of research. The text of this course, by necessity, appears at first to focus on curating and display, but do not let this suggest that your work should somehow stop still or be wrapped in bubble wrap until it is made public.

After the rollercoaster of your first two level three courses you should now be feeling confident about your practice and have a good understanding of your research themes and way of working. It is expected that you know enough about your own work to be able to continue to work in the studio and to be alive to how your research into curatorial strategies might open up new avenues, suggest new creative departures or help you achieve the goals from *Major Project* with even more potency.

Space and place are fantastic materials for art. Making your work public can have a massive effect on how it functions. Site specific work, or immersive installations in gallery spaces are just two of the many ways that art can utilise space in interesting creative ways. Your audience and their entry into the work also has great creative potential. Previous students have told stories, choreographed dancers, made films, directed audience members to follow routes, led guided meditation, or met up with old friends and enjoyed a live band amongst the art.

Your research will be extensive, far more than you can possibly use for one showing, website, installation or intervention that might be the culmination of this course. That is when remembering the title comes back as a refrain. Your notes from this course will be a gift to your future artist self from you the undergraduate, and may well be the fuel for countless exciting projects as yet unimagined.

*Sustaining your Practice* builds on the other two Level 3 courses, *Major Project* and *Contextual Studies*. It is a self directed course, structured to support you in:

- resolving your major project for presentation, including making new work in the studio
- presenting your project to a public audience in an appropriate form
- continuing to develop a contextual awareness of your practice
- developing an understanding of curation, and the role of the curator
- identifying appropriate progression routes into employment, self-employment, professional practice, continued education or maintaining a networked practice.

*Sustaining your Practice* asks you to select work for public exhibition. An exhibition is loosely referred to as a 'viewing platform'. You might go for the traditional solo or group show in a conventional gallery, but your viewing platform could equally well be a publication, paper-based display or archive, an event, site-specific intervention, non-gallery setting, art fair, competition or virtual space (online platform). Whichever viewing platform you choose, you should focus on making your work available for others in a space that is contextually appropriate and which develops critical enquiry towards your work.

Where *Major Project* was concerned with finding your personal voice as a practitioner, and *Contextual Studies* was concerned with placing your work through research and context, *Sustaining your Practice* is concerned with articulating that voice to an audience. You'll think about where your work can fit in the 'real world' outside of a university degree course, identify potential progression routes and develop the necessary skills to help realise your aims.

As with all Level 3 courses, this course will require a high degree of self-motivation and autonomy. You'll use your learning log and the assignments to support the development of self-reflection, critique, time management and professionalism.

## **Course aims and outcomes**

The aims of this course are to:

- Evaluate, build on, develop and complete the body of work made during *Major Project*
- enable you to complete a body of work for professional public presentation
- develop your understanding of the variety of creative strategies available for presenting and contextualising your creative practice
- further develop your understanding of the making of art, the history of art, and contemporary art practice.

On successful completion of the course you'll be able to:

- complete an ambitious and highly focused body of work to exhibition standard
- present that work to an audience in a way that is appropriate to your practice
- identify networks and support structures to sustain your practice
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a range of historic and contemporary approaches to curation and presentation of art to an audience

## Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria for Sustaining your Practice are listed below. If you're going to have your work assessed to gain formal credits, make sure you take note of these criteria and consider how each of the assignments you complete demonstrates evidence of them. On completion of each assignment, and before you send your assignment to your tutor, test yourself against the criteria; in other words, do a self-assessment, and see how you think you would do. Note down your findings for each assignment you've completed, noting all your perceived strengths and weaknesses, taking into account the criteria every step of the way. This will be helpful for your tutor to see, as well as helping you prepare for assessment.

- Demonstration of technical and visual skills – Materials, techniques, observational skills, visual awareness, design and compositional skills.
- Quality of outcome – Content, application of knowledge, presentation of work in a coherent manner, discernment, conceptualisation of thoughts, communication of ideas.
- Demonstration of creativity – Imagination, experimentation, invention, articulating independent judgements and a personal creative voice.
- Context – Demonstrate awareness of appropriate historical, critical, professional and/or emerging contexts and debates in your creative practice and use critical and reflective skills to support a self-directed and sustained personal and/or professional position.

## Planning your time

Read the whole course guide first so you know what lies ahead. Next, prepare a provisional timetable and send it to your tutor as part of Assignment One so you're both aware of when the various stages will take place. Set yourself deadlines for discrete tasks where possible, but be aware that you will be developing a personal response to the brief of presenting your work and so your timetable will be individual to you.

Remember that you are researching exhibition and curatorial potential with a wider scope than just your own upcoming degree show. This means that the relationship between your research and the practical logistics of your project may need careful management. Some research will be time sensitive and have a direct bearing on your proposal, when other research may give you a broader contextual understanding of your position or be filed for future use. It should be becoming obvious that you'll need to be highly organised to see this course through so think and plan ahead.

Document all your research, correspondence, etc. in your learning log. Provide good quality photographs (and moving image if appropriate). This is a crucial element in your documentation.

## Resources

You're expected to research independently and be proactive and imaginative in seeking viewing platforms. Links are provided as a starting point, but it's up to you to go further afield and seek out more relevant and appropriate resources which will inform your understanding of the specific context into which you will be emerging as an artist.

## Reading List

As well as the resources suggested below, continue to build your own personal reading list that supports your personal ideas and interests.

## Essential

Obrist, H. (2008) *A Brief History of Curating*. Zurich, JRP Ringier

Rose, G. (2007) *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction To The Interpretation Of Visual Materials*. London Sage

Thornton, S. (2008) *Seven Days in the Art World*. London, Granta

Sharmacharja, S. (Ed) (2009), *A Manual for the 21st Century Art Institution*. London. Koenig Books

## Recommended

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996) *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York, Harper Collins

Fisher, E. and Fortnum, R. (2013) *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*. London, Black Dog

O'Doherty, B. (199) *Inside the White Cube*. University California Press

Weintraub, L (2003) *Making Contemporary Art: How Today's Artists Think and Work*. London: Thames and Hudson.

## Journals and Websites

[www.a-n.co.uk](http://www.a-n.co.uk)

[www.artspromotional.co.uk](http://www.artspromotional.co.uk)

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

[www.axisweb.org](http://www.axisweb.org) [www.newexhibitions.com](http://www.newexhibitions.com)

Creative Review [www.creativereview.co.uk](http://www.creativereview.co.uk)

Critical Quarterly [www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0011-1562](http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0011-1562)

Eye [www.eyemagazine.com/](http://www.eyemagazine.com/)

Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture [www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=165/](http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=165/)

Journal of Visual Culture <http://vcu.sagepub.com/> October [www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/octo](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/octo)

Oxford Art Journal [www.oaj.oxfordjournals.org/](http://www.oaj.oxfordjournals.org/)

## Locus of Engagement – Sites and spaces

As well as more traditional gallery spaces, artists and curators are becoming ever more imaginative and resourceful in a difficult economic climate and are accustomed to finding spaces or sites such as empty shops, pop-up galleries, re-used spaces, renovated outlets, libraries, hospitals, street corners, bus stops, warehouses, open studios – or even your own home or land where the audience comes to you. The social and geographic context may be particularly relevant. Does your work involve the community, participatory arts, socially engaged work, education or health and housing? Try to find the most appropriate place to show your work, bearing in mind practicalities such as audience, scale, access, suitability, location, relevance to your work, footfall, and support from those involved with the space but also taking time to consider the creative and conceptual potential of the site or space. It is important to have ambition for your work and to research the best situation, however your choices must also be realistic and realisable within your timescale.

## Professionalism

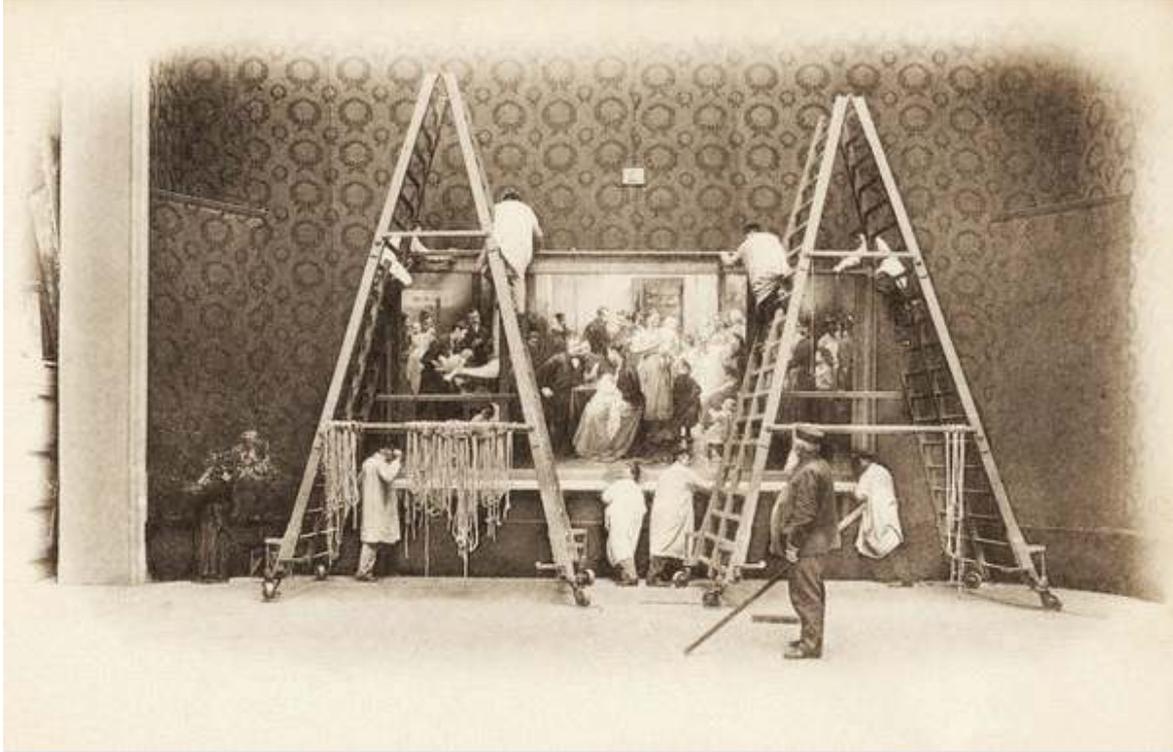
*“Aims are underlying directives, notions that answer the “why”, why we are pursuing something; goals are the “what”; the tangible thing or action undertaken and presented as product. But if we suspend goals, leaving them undefined, flexible and open to discovery; then anything is possible; and if we are clear about our aims and attentive to them, then no matter what path we go down, exploring where it might lead but guided by our aims, it is possible to arrive at the appropriate, perhaps unexpected, and responsive end.”*

Jacob, MJ (2007) ‘Making space for art’ in Marincola, P (ed.) *What Makes a Great Exhibition?*  
Philadelphia Reaktion Books, Limited, p136

Having a professional approach to communicating with people about your work is vital. As you begin to make contacts outside the studio, growing your networks and establishing a presence in the art world, develop your skills in talking about your work by writing out short crib sheets, or practicing at home. Take time to think carefully about what you want to communicate about your work, remembering not to make any assumptions that people know your work so you will need to be very clear about what it is and what your intentions are. Always be clear about your expectations and the expectations of others when negotiating an exhibition opportunity and remember you will need commitment and motivation. Always conduct yourself in an appropriately professional manner.

## Part one

# Contemporary curatorial discourse



The middle panel at the Salon des Artistes Français, Grand Palais, May 1903

## Past and Present Viewing Platforms

Since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, exhibiting art in public has been vital to the development and awareness of new art. The Paris Salons, established as a place for exhibition where the work of the most respected artists of the day could be seen, were hosted by the Académie des Beaux-Arts and began in 1663. They were open to the public, not merely for the 'artists' club' and quickly grew in status, Royal patronage being a fundamental part of this process. In London some 100 years later, artists were keen to gain the prestige associated with exhibiting at the newly-formed Royal Academy, who held an annual open exhibition. Which continues today. Through one-off shows such as The Armory Show in New York City in 1913, the public could see how techniques and subjects were developing in the modern art era. Over history, viewing platforms have been created in a wide range of architectural spaces and varied in their accessibility to the public, often distinguishing between formal and informal audiences and between high art and low art.

In more recent times the formal gallery space has been challenged, and multiple parallel viewing platforms have been tested and established. The Dadaists and Situationists took their work to the streets, and in the late 1950s and early 1960's, events that brought together painting, poetry, music, dance, and theatre were staged as live actions. The latter were named happenings by the American artist Allan Kaprow. Today, the emergence of the Art Fair (British examples include, Frieze, Sluice Art Fair, London Art Fair, Affordable Art Fair) provides a platform for galleries large and small to take their work to the public under one roof. Artists based in studio groups or their own homes open their doors annually for Open Studios and pop up displays of work can be found on street corners, in empty shops, in domestic gardens and in a wide range of organisations from hospitals to businesses premises and factories.

With the staging, viewing and exhibition of artworks happening almost anywhere, artists have become their own curators, publicists, managers, technicians and agents and take ownership over every aspect of exhibiting their work. There are more and more ways of seeing art in everyday, provocative, predictable and unusual spaces. All these have one thing in common, to make artwork public.



Read Chapter 1 – The emergence of curatorial discourse from the late 1960s to the present from the book *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures* by Paul O’Neill (in your course documents). Using examples of exhibitions given in the text, reflect on the creative and critical possibilities offered by staging an exhibition.

How does O’Neill’s position compare to your own? Write your responses to the chapter in your learning log.

Curating.info: <http://curating.info/>

The Curatorial Network: [www2.curatorial.net/go/en/read/Home](http://www2.curatorial.net/go/en/read/Home)



Sam Gillam, *Light Depth*, 1969 (acrylic on canvas)

## Useful resources

To begin with, research two of the following major exhibition venues, their origin and their context within the contemporary art world. Think about how they differ and how their status attracts an audience, but mainly look at their spaces and how that represents their context:

- The Armory Show [www.thearmoryshow.com](http://www.thearmoryshow.com)
- Documenta <http://d13.documenta.de/>
- The Turbine Hall, Tate Modern [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)
- The Venice Biennale, [www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org)
- The Frieze Art Fair [www.friezelondon.com](http://www.friezelondon.com)



Michel Majerus, *Aquarell*, 1996

## The role of the artist-curator

Historically a curator managed the collection, made the decisions and operated in heritage-based spaces such as galleries, museums, libraries or archival spaces. In the past, the responsibilities of a curator in an institution with a large collection included researching, maintaining and presenting the institution artefacts. One would have found their roles described as keepers and in some institutions this title remains today.

Although this still holds true to some extent, curators have been shifting to more innovative, diverse and experimental ways of showing work in closer dialogue with the exhibiting artists. A curator now gives the work an interpretation, a particular context within a space and sees the space the work is exhibited in as an artwork in itself. Many artists are taking the plunge and curating their own work, venturing out of the studio and presenting themselves to the public. The roles become fused, with the responsibility of making and authorship inseparable from the demands of overseeing every detail from conception to promotion, exposition and evaluation.

### Useful resources:

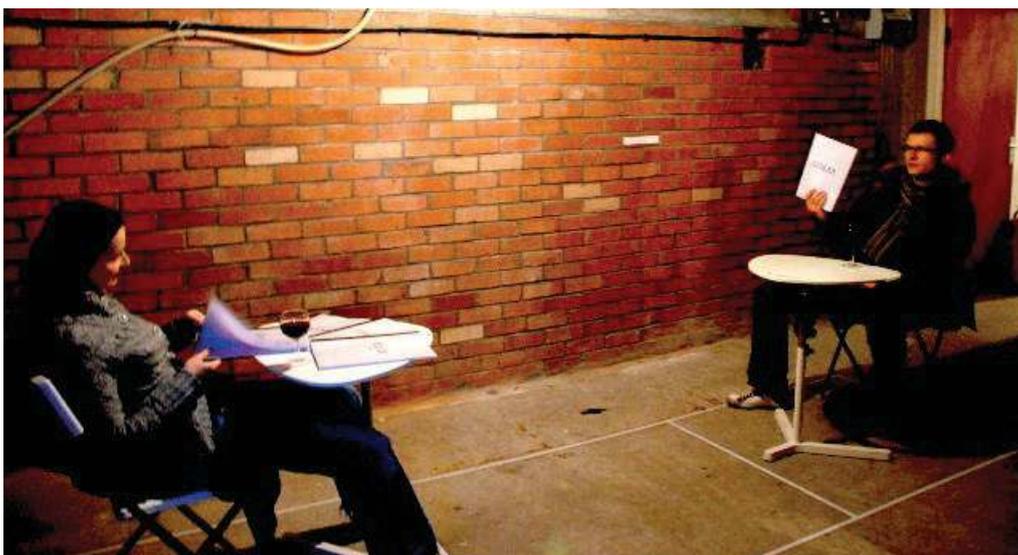
- June Yap (2006) *Multi-faceted Curator: The Facet of Multi-culturalism*:  
[www.culture-asef.org/english/txt/2006/curator\\_workshop](http://www.culture-asef.org/english/txt/2006/curator_workshop)



Romanian artist Iorga setting up at Galeria de Arta Orizont, 2013.

*“The image we have of the curator today: the curator-as-artist, a roaming, freelance designer of exhibitions, or in his own witty formulation, a ‘spiritual guest worker’... If artists since Marcel Duchamp have affirmed selection and arrangement as legitimate artistic strategies, was it not simply a matter of time before curatorial practice...itself defined by selection and arrangement...would come to be seen as an art that operates on the field of art itself?”*

Aaron Schuster, on curator Harald Szeemann’s death in 2005



Dialogues: A Fake Romance? exhibition, Elysium Gallery, Swansea, 2010

The intimate relationship that a creative artist has with their work gives them the potential to be most skilled at delivering it sensitively to an audience and has led artists to work in parallel in museums, in education and in social situations.

Simultaneous responsibilities and multiple roles and skills mean a greater focus on self-management. Throughout your research of spaces, you'll come across curators turned artists, artists turned curators and, more excitingly, practitioners from other occupations (educators, historians, designers, scientists, etc.) who have made room for cross-disciplinary viewpoints evoking a connection between art and life.

In your proposal, you are acting as curator – with a vision of how the work should be displayed – as well as being the artist deciding on what the viewer may get out of it. So if a science laboratory fits in conceptually with your work, by all means site your viewing platform in a laboratory!

Having read about the development of curation and the artist curator – take some time now to make a counterargument to the major spaces you researched initially. Find some grass roots, artist led or community based exhibitions – perhaps those that have punched above their weight and made a mark on art history, or perhaps some from your own local arts ecology. Below are some examples which you are free to use in your own selection:

<http://www.jeremydeller.org/OpenBedroom/OpenBedroom.php>

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

<http://jamesbridle.com/>

<https://www.deveron-projects.com/home/>

### **Further sources for artist-curator projects:**

- Jaroslav Kozlowski, Akumulatory
- Robin Klassnik, Matt's Gallery
- City Racing, London
- The Commercial Gallery, London
- 30 Underwood Street, London
- Transmission, Glasgow
- Vyner Street, London
- G39, Glasgow
- Transition Gallery, London
- Aid and Abet, Cambridge
- Paper Gallery, Manchester
- Outpost, Norwich

## Further Curatorial strategies

*"Is there something we could call the curatorial? A way of linking objects, images, processes, people, locations, histories, and discourses in physical space? An endeavor that encourages you to start from the artwork but not stay there, to think with it but also away from and against it."*

Maria Lind, 'On the Curatorial', Artforum, 2009, XV. A

The visual arts is an activity that we as artists take part in; work is something we produce, hence it becomes a cultural production. Different cultural factors are in play and it's our job to make our art part of that culture and to engage with the audience. The subject who sees our work makes the work exist so we must consider them. The more the viewer sees, the more critical and experienced they become, so curatorial strategies are shifting from the traditional to the innovative, just as contemporary art is forever evolving.



Defamiliarization project, Diana Ali, Portugal, 2009

## Useful resources

Hans Ulrich Obrist, The Art of Curating:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=gylVCqf23cA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gylVCqf23cA)

Research some experimental or innovative contemporary curatorial strategies. Below are some examples of different ways of exhibiting work. Examine these, and any others you find, and note down the curator's intentions and how they have subverted the traditional space.

- Publication/paper-based display – Sam Treadway and Ricarda Vidal, *Revolve:R* <http://revolve6.wordpress.com/>
- Archive – Goshka Macuga
- An event – Ellie Harrison [www.ellieharrison.com/](http://www.ellieharrison.com/)
- Site-specific – Hans Ulrich Obrist, do it [http://curatorsintl.org/exhibitions/do\\_it](http://curatorsintl.org/exhibitions/do_it)
- Intervention – Anneka French, *Interventions Part 1: Dispersal*
- Virtual spaces – Darren Williams and Jason Davies, *Digital Dialogues* <http://digitaldialogues.co.uk/>
- Non-gallery settings – *The Kitchen Show*, Hans Ulrich Obrist (who curated his first exhibition in his own kitchen)
- Home Live Art

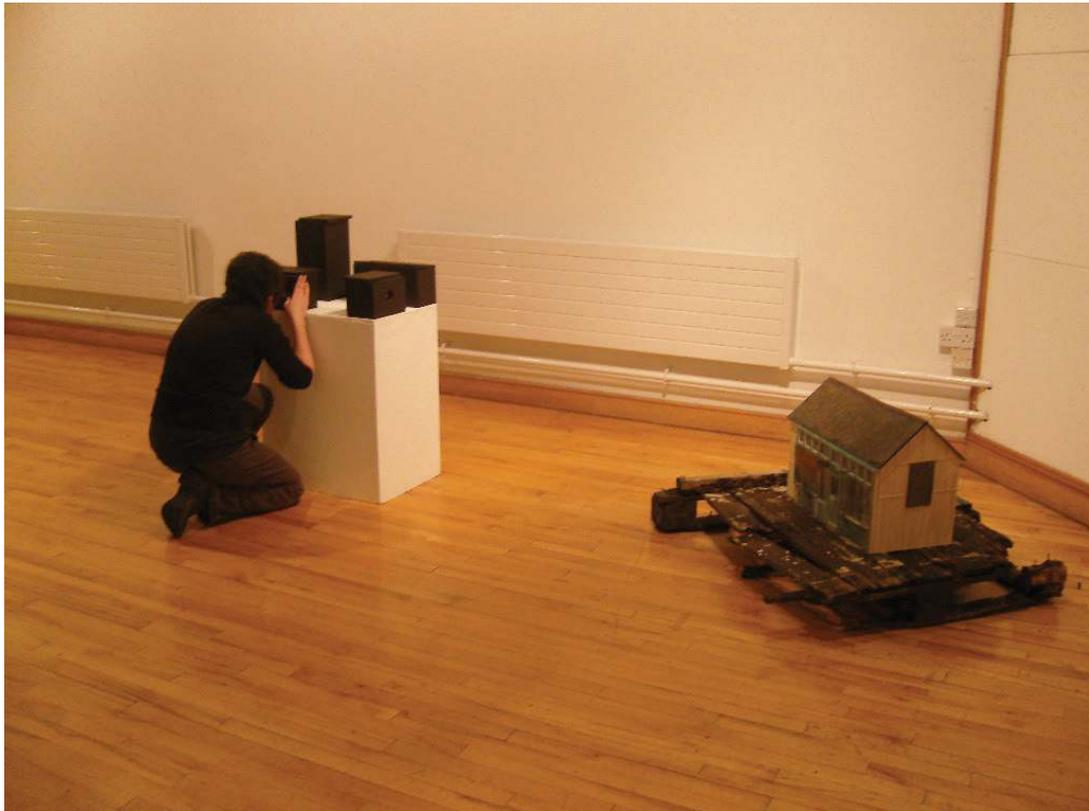
## A further example of a non gallery setting

- Home Live Art [www.homeliveart.com](http://www.homeliveart.com) - a nomadic organisation that creates socially engaged work, festivals and works with established organisations and galleries too.
- Reused spaces – Empty Shops Network <http://wikiemptyshopsnetwork.co.uk/index.php/>
- Open studios – Harrington Mills [www.harringtonmillstudios.co.uk/](http://www.harringtonmillstudios.co.uk/)
- Primary Studios, Nottingham - artist led initiatives and studio gallery space [www.weareprimary.org/](http://www.weareprimary.org/)
- Virtual and physical spaces combine in an artist's project in her loft
- Instability in Stability <http://instability-in-stability.co.uk>

## Useful resources

- Liz Wells, 'Curatorial Strategy as Critical Intervention: The Genesis of Facing East' in Rugg, J. & Sedgwick, M. (2011) *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*. Bristol: Intellect Books (pp.29–44).

The recent history of museum architecture has seen the exhibition space change from grand buildings like The Louvre and Joseph Paxton's glass structure for the Great Exhibition of 1851 to factory settings, etc., where the space is as important as the work being displayed within it. The advent of evolving media has allowed sculpture to expand into an environment; technology has allowed the picture to become a screen or a projection; and the addition of sound or other sensory augmentation turns the gallery space into an environment that the artist can manipulate.



An audience member interacting with a sound piece at Pleasurewood Thrills! exhibition, The Workstation, Sheffield, 2009

Visit three aesthetically diverse viewing platforms. Explore how each one evokes a sense of 'belonging' in relation to the work displayed. Remember that a viewing platform can range from a white cube gallery to an empty shop that has been transformed into a gallery space, you might see artwork in a beach hut facing the sea or in a theatre foyer, it might be an online platform or on a forest path. You may encounter an artist work unexpectedly, alternatively it could be something you plan to visit. When you enter the space, revel in the aesthetics of the surroundings and the sensations that are encapsulated in the works and the spaces in between them. How do the spaces in context alter your preconceptions of contemporary art?

If the work is in a gallery setting, how does the space allow the works to have a dialogue with one another? How do the artist's statements or other information anchor the work and its themes? How do the shape, colour, surface and scale of the works relate to the surrounding architectural space? If you are viewing work outside the gallery space, consider what the relationship is between the work, its placement and the context. Now consider how your work could fit into each space.

## What is 'exhibition standard'?

*"I believe that an art exhibition can be engaging, fun and deeply intellectually satisfying and serious; these are not contradictory concepts in art."*

Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles Times, 'MOCA's director defends his record, denies charges of some trustees', July 21, 2012

The other two Painting 3 courses should have made you aware of the conceptual aspects of your work and what it may communicate to an audience. Your judgment may be biased towards your own work, but does it really compare with similar works exposed to the public?

Go to exhibitions, look at online portfolios and browse through art magazines such as Art Monthly, Modern Painters, Frieze magazine and the online artist publication and The Artists Information Company judge the work in comparison to your own. Read reviews of the work and digest what critics have said about the exhibitions you've attended or read about. Take the role of critic and consider how your work would fit into that space or theme. Your analysis should include description, interpretation, evaluation and judgment of the work. Write this up in your learning log.



A State of Un-Play exhibition, Atelier 35, Bucharest, 2013

## Useful resources

- Art Agenda [www.art-agenda.com/](http://www.art-agenda.com/)

## Useful resources

- O'Doherty, B. (2000) *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, Chapter 5: The Gallery as Gesture (p.87). (You'll find this chapter on the student website.)



Opening event, Temporal, an exhibition of egg tempera paintings made in response to the buildings of Cambridge Judge Business School by Caroline Wright, 2017. Photograph: Jean-Luc Benazet

### **Finding the right space for your work**

There is no specific formula or method to get your work into the public eye and it will depend on how proactive you are, your professionalism, your existing networks and the quality of your work. You can find out about opportunities through word of mouth, advertisements in art periodicals or online. Many art directories offer opportunities and jobs ('jobs and opps'), for example (see below). Curators, gallery owners, artists' collectives and open studios, to name but a few, are constantly looking for ways to get their work in the public arena. You need to be able to tap into these networks and build up your own as well as being proactive and making your own opportunities. As a rule, building out from your existing network is more likely to succeed than cold calling. Where you live, your community, your friends and colleagues all have the potential to provide opportunities to share your work with others.

Revisit the list of potential viewing platforms you made in Part One and see if you can now add to it. Remember there are many spaces that can be used as viewing platforms, from your own home, to community settings, schools, libraries, etc.

The following directories have an array of opportunities for showing your work. You need to be patient, rigorous, take time in browsing and think realistically and take time in browsing. Keep a mental checklist to assess how each opportunity connects to your work and personal aims. Is the opportunity for a residency away from home? Is it a gallery space looking to show new work? Does the gallery have a reputation for showing work of a particular medium and does your own work fit into this sphere?

Asking yourself key questions at this stage can prevent wasted time applying for opportunities that are not a good fit for your work.

- Artsadmin [www.artsadmin.co.uk/](http://www.artsadmin.co.uk/) Sign up to artsadmin's e-digest to receive regular listings of artist opportunities and other related information.
- Arts News [www.artsjobs.org.uk/arts-news-listings/](http://www.artsjobs.org.uk/arts-news-listings/)
- a-n [www.a-n.co.uk/jobs\\_and\\_opps](http://www.a-n.co.uk/jobs_and_opps)
- Axis [www.axisweb.org/opACCESS.aspx](http://www.axisweb.org/opACCESS.aspx)
- Re-Title [www.re-title.com/](http://www.re-title.com/)
- Resartis <http://www.resartis.org/en/> Listing for international residencies. Note listings are not quality checked.

It's worth joining mailing lists so you can get regular updates of opportunities. If you're thorough in your research you'll find that your database will grow rapidly. Please note that some listings are not quality checked. It is your responsibility to research opportunities with considerations and costs, levels of artist support, accommodation, reputation and market awareness. There some useful tips below on the type of questions and research you should be doing.

Once you've made a list, pick 4–6 possible opportunities. Make a note of why each one is suitable for you and suggest how the viewing platform could accommodate your work. Consider your work in terms of aesthetics, themes, medium and communication of concepts. Look at the archive of your chosen spaces, what work do they usually show, do they host group shows or solo shows or a combination? Is the space artist led or curator led?

You'll need to understand the environment you'll be working in and what issues or contingencies may occur. For each choice, make notes and collate information on:

- the type of venue – is it public/private, commercial/non-commercial, subsidised/independent, an art collective/open studios format?
- the space – location, context, size, lighting, access, remit, mission statement, reputation, local audience, surrounding artists
- funding – sponsored, self-funded, subsidised, charity, not-for-profit
- individuals and organisations involved – will vary, but may include curators, administrators, directors, proprietors, companies, public associations, professional bodies.
- audience - what and who are the potential audience, is there passing trade or is the audience by invitation only.

## Tips

1. Target the correct space for your type of work. Think about the stage you're at in your career. Will this be your first show or do you have a CV of recent exhibitions? Who will be interested in your work and do they exhibit certain types of media only?
2. Be careful not to 'cold call' places that don't accept unsolicited proposals. Instead look for group shows or an open call where you can respond to a particular theme.
3. Be sure that the spaces and contacts are the right people for you; if they are, build up a relationship and maintain a steady correspondence.
4. You now have your artist's statement, CV and biography in place. Look at their application process and tailor yours to their criteria but don't change your ethos and original focus for the sake of getting an exhibition. Research their archives and previous exhibitions so you know the types of work they exhibit. Analyse how your own work could fit in with the gallery's usual exhibiting policies so that when you make contact you can emphasise how your own work connects and links to their past exhibitions.
5. If possible, contact artists who've shown in the spaces and find out about their experiences. What timescales did they work to and how did they construct their programmes?
6. Look at websites, reviews, press releases and read mission statements and remits.

You'll need to provide evidence of all this research as part of your next assignment submission. In Part Three, you'll look at how you can go about making links with the spaces you've identified.

Finally, you might like to look at the life of Phyllida Barlow and the way her studio practice has related to her exhibiting her work through the years. Compare her 'objects for the home' made in the nineties with her presentation at the Venice Biennale. This may serve as a useful reminder that it is your relationship with your own work that is key to sustaining your practice, and to remember to position that centrally in you thinking – giving yourself time to be in the studio.

- <https://www.wikiart.org/en/phyllida-barlow>
- <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/tate-britain-commission-2014-phyllida-barlow/exhibition-catalogue/essay>
- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/artists/phyllida-barlow-struggling-sell-art-50-years-lives-slum/>

## Alumni Allstars – in conversation with OCA Alumnus Andrew Howe

### *Thinking back to your degree show with the OCA, How do you feel about that work now and how do you feel about the experience of presenting it publicly?*

For a lot of students I suppose their degree show is possibly their first public exhibition but I worked as a practising artist throughout the 11 years that I undertook my degree and during that time I put on exhibitions; sometimes solo and sometimes with other artists. I was used to the practical mechanics of selecting work and the nitty gritty so that aspect went relatively smoothly in what was a much bigger space than I have ever shown in before. My show was in an artist led studio and gallery space which had previously been a Co-op supermarket and as you can imagine that is quite a large and challenging space. It was very dark, fluorescent lights and no walls. What walls there were could not be used to hang work as a condition of the gallery's lease so I had to use some imagination. I used Herras fencing which featured in quite a few of my art work so it fitted with the concepts of new development on land that was otherwise naturalised – edgelands and the dynamic flow between dereliction and coming in to new use.

### *That's really interesting because in a way the space suggested a solution which became indistinguishable from your art work or indeed was an art work?*

It was quite a sculptural thing. I worked with two of the Directors of the space who are sculptors and we devised a layout together. It was definitely a creative act in itself.

### *Did you feel the work for your degree show was different to previous shows – perhaps more ambitious or riskier?*

It was certainly a little bit riskier. Partly because this was a degree and I was demonstrating that, but also because I had been experimenting with a range of styles and processes as a student so the show was more eclectic. I agonised over whether to present a more coherent set of processes but in the end I threw everything at it. Some people were confused by the fact that it was one artist, others could see the connections and different aspects of the same subject. One piece, a painting I originally produced on the ipad and was shown digitally, I also produced three oil paintings from it. Originally I wanted to just hang the one I preferred. In the end there was a wall that fitted all three and it was an interesting study into painting – seeing three similar but different works on the same subject.

### *By showing all three you are referencing your own process in a nice way... What have you been up to since graduating and has it involved any further presentations of your work?*

I can't remember the exact timeline to know when this happened in relation to my degree show but I contacted an artist who I knew had been in a number of Edgeland exhibitions called Day Bowman, a painter, she was curating an exhibition called Edgelands, funnily enough, and I went to see the exhibition and panel discussion with other artists, an academic and writers Iain Sinclair and Nick Papadimitriou. It was great to meet all those people and as part of my discussions during the day she invited me to become a guest artist in the exhibition as a touring exhibition. She came to my studio, bought one of my books and discussed the project. The curator at Aberystwyth, where she had proposed I might join the exhibition, didn't want

to accept other artists which was a big setback to me at the time. I entered and applied for lots of things. I had entered a piece of writing about walking in Google Street View compared to walking in the real world and that was featured in a zine that was included in an exhibition curated by the Loiterers Resistance Movement at the People's History Museum in Manchester which was an amazing exhibition which many artists and psycho geographers took part in.

I saw the research process leading up to my degree show as a real blue print for a working process so I have conceived a research plan now where I perceive any ideas I have as projects and monitor my projects in quite a systematic way. Some fall by the wayside but others keep on going or morph into new projects so its quite a dynamic process.

***Have you continued to connect with your community of practitioners – the like minded people that you seem to have gathered around you based on your interests. For such an apparently solitary activity, it is often other people that help make things happen?***

Since that experience of contacting Day, who I had seen as quite a high profile artists, and who was easy and welcoming, I have since contacted lots of people! – they have all responded. I have been conversing with a variety of curators, academics and artists. I went to the World Congress of Psycho geographers which is a slightly tongue in cheek title at the University of Huddersfield which was a great event to network.

***What would you say doing the degree taught you about how studio practice relates to display and exhibition and how has your thinking developed post degree?***

I've had three exhibitions subsequent to that degree show; one in a small café, one in an arts centre and one I've curated which is a large exhibition with 11 artists including me. Each time I have used a core of work I have shown before and then introduced new work, thinking about how that changes the overall dynamic and picking out different aspects of the research. I'm very aware that the spaces are not the classic white cube gallery and also the audience is different each time. I'm making a series of drawings at the moment and I have no idea where that might go, but equally I am always looking out for call outs to take part in group shows. I am also looking to form collaborations, focusing on researching particular themes in socially engaged projects for which I hope to secure funding. This would bring my studio practice into an entirely different public arena for me.



## Assignment one

Send to your tutor:

- any new works or works in progress for review
- evidence of a developing exhibition plan

A short written self-assessment (400–500 words) of your current body of work and your progress in preparing for public exhibition.

**Remember to check the assessment criteria for this course and review your work against the criteria before you submit it to your tutor.**

**Your tutor may take a while to get back to you so carry on with the course while you're waiting.**