

Where do we go from here?

A series of conversational events *by and for* those working in Aberdeen's visual arts sector...

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Where do we go from here?

Where do we go from here? is a series of four conversational events that invite contributions, questions and future possibilities for Aberdeen's arts ecology from those working in the sector. In July of 2021 the British Art Show 9 [BAS9], the biggest touring exhibition of contemporary art in the UK arrived to Aberdeen Art Gallery. It was framed as a significant moment for the city and its creative and cultural sector. A significant moment certainly – but under what terms? For whom? And for how long? The BAS9 will have no significance beyond the walls of the gallery unless the arts and cultural ecology make it so.

An arts ecology is the many interdependent networks of society and economy that shape the demand for the production of arts and cultural offerings. This includes relationships between the organisations, individual cultural workers, policy makers, as well as wider communities. It can be thought of as the 'spaces' in which visual art is produced and shown. It can also be thought of in relation to issues of power, responsibility, support and diversity for example. This constellation sometimes makes articulating and mapping these relationships and the real lived conditions they produce challenging as individuals.

The events use an approach of co-authorship to begin to generate knowledge on the existing conditions that inform Aberdeen's visual arts sector; the opportunities and challenges. Whilst posing questions to ourselves and each other; What are our needs? What are the future possibilities? Where do we go from here? This focuses on non-hierarchical models of facilitation and is open to all those whose work contributes to the visual arts sector of Aberdeen, who are willing and able to contribute their time.

The programme will open up ways of contributing, for those unable to physically attend through using digital forms such as googledrive. The material generated will be documented and disseminated back into public via online platforms inviting this work to collectively continue beyond the programme itself.

This model reflects there is not one definitive answer to development. Arts ecologies at their best are diverse, disagreeable and divergent and operate on multiple levels over time. The programme hopes to be a space to gather and continue the ground work for future possibilities.

Dates: **Wednesday 6th October.** 6-8.30pm, **Tuesday 12th October.** 2-4.30pm, **Friday 22nd October.** 6-8.30pm, **Thursday 28th October.** 2.00-4.30pm. Tickets available [here](#).

Location: Look Again Project Space, Aberdeen 32 St Andrew Street Aberdeen AB25 1JA

Online: Further details for participating online via googledrive can be found [here](#).

Why is this happening?

In July of 2021 the British Art Show 9 arrived to Aberdeen. The biggest touring exhibition of contemporary art in the UK. Its arrival to Aberdeen Art Gallery was framed as a significant moment for the city and its creative and cultural sector. A significant moment certainly – but significant for whom? Under what terms? And for how long? Remain unanswered.

There have been certain moments in the history of the city's attempts to develop and frame the cultural offer primarily led by institutions and local authority. Freelance artists and workers are often absent from this development despite the conditions produced affecting their practice. The events invite those in organisations, institutions, and freelancers to this conversation.

Why is it just the visual arts sector?

The short answer is capacity and time. There are however some marked differences in terms of needs within specialisms. We hope the framing of the event for those whose work **contributes** to the visual arts sector acts as a frame to invite not only those working in organisations, institutions or as freelancers to participate. But to those who for example may have a practice of writing, or podcasting that also contribute to these conversations.

How can I participate?

We have tried to provide varied times and days to facilitate work schedules and those with carer responsibilities, details of sign up sessions are available at the link below. If you can't make it physically or would prefer to engage in another way, we have a google-drive available for reflections, questions and feedback this can be left anonymously. See the drive for full details.

In person: tickets can be booked [here](#)

Online: [here](#)

What is a co-authored approach?

Co-authorship is understood here as a critical attitude towards competitive structures within the art world which prioritize individuals. Instead building spaces of collaboration that promote generosity, co-learning, sharing, experimentation. On a local level it works against previous approaches to cultural development which have been top down.

What's expected of me? What should I expect? Where does this material go?

Before

On signing up to the physical events and participating online we have a set of guidelines that we would ask you to help hold up in the space. On the googledrive we have a growing resource of texts available although it is not necessary that you read them to attend.

During

Arriving to the event there will be a maximum of eight people at a time. A table will be available which we will gather around, as well as a conversation there will be other modes of engaging through writing. Rachel will help support the conversation in terms of supporting equal participation, but would encourage you to come with opinions and questions to share. Examples of what questions we might be exploring together;

What do artists/cultural workers need to know?

What are the challenges/opportunities of working here?

What are the needs?

What new ecologies of practice exist or can be formed? In which spaces and places can this grow? What are the ideal conditions?

Where do we go from here?

The session will be recorded, through audio and transcribed for online, however if necessary this can be anonymised.

After

The events will be documented online and available to a wider audience. There may also be natural outcomes generated through identified needs within the discussion. This could include for example a network, discussion group or smaller collaborations between people.

Where do we go from here?

Guidelines for participants¹

Where do we go from here? is a conversational series examining the arts ecology of Aberdeen from those whose work contributes to it. The events use an approach to co-authorship² to generate knowledge on the existing conditions that inform Aberdeen's visual arts sector; the opportunities and challenges. We will pose questions to ourselves and each other; What are the conditions? What are our needs? Where are the gaps? What are the future possibilities?

Co-authorship is understood here as a critical attitude towards competitive structures within the art world which prioritize individuals. Instead building spaces of collaboration that promote generosity, co-learning, sharing, experimentation.³

Where do we go from here? works be a safe place of collective learning, sharing, reflection and constructive criticism.

By participating we respect each other's educational background, references, language used, gender, race, ideology, sexuality and temperament.

We will work to support each other, where questions and challenges to thinking are made in a compassionate way.

By participating we ask that you hold up this space with us and provide a welcoming environment for everyone in the group.

Contact details:

We're always open to feedback and questions. If you have any please get in touch with **Rachel** at rachelagrant1@hotmail.co.uk

[1] The development of these guidelines are indebted to artist Brett Bloom's Camp BREAKDOWN BREAK DOWN held at the Scottish Sculpture Workshop, 2015 and the Curatorial Fellowship 2019-20 supported by Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen.

[2] The joy and precarity in this model is that it relies on who participates, who speaks or feels able to speak.

[3] Thanks to anthropologist, artist, curator, and Lecturer Dr Jennifer Clarke for her continued rigor in thinking in these terms.

Paradigms

Where do we go from here? is part of the public programme of **Paradigms** an exhibition a work by emerging artists based in Aberdeen and Plymouth, curated by Rachel Grant.

The exhibition includes existing and newly commissioned work from visual artists Phoebe McBride, Molly Erin McCarthy, Rhys Morgan, Carly Seller and Abby Beatrice Quick. Writer Tilly Craig was commissioned to produce a new work for the publication.

The opportunity has been supported by creative unit Look Again in Aberdeen in response to the British Art Show 9 arriving in Aberdeen in July 2021. To provide connectivity and dialogue between two of the host cities Aberdeen and Plymouth Look Again created the ‘Aberdeen//Plymouth Curatorial exchange’ the result of which is this exhibition and public programme of events.

Exhibition details:

The exhibition runs from the **1st – 30th October 2021** at the Look Again project space, Aberdeen.

Opening night: Thursday 30th September 6-8pm. All welcome.

Opening hours:

Thursday: 5-8pm

Friday: 12-5pm

Sat/sun: 11-4pm

Location: Look Again Project Space, Aberdeen 32 St Andrew Street Aberdeen AB25 1JA

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