

**Focus Live Art
Monday 24th September 2001, 11am
Brighton University, Brighton**

List of Participants

Liz Aggiss	Divas
Mark Ball	Fierce Earth
Daniel Brine	Live Art Development Agency
Sophie Cameron	New Work Network
Desiree Cherrington	South East Arts
Mark Dey	West Midlands Arts
Becky Edmunds	
Katie Etherage	
Peter Evans	
Nicola Hood (minutes)	Arts Council of England
Lisa Hubbard	South East Arts
Lois Keidan	Live Art Development Agency
Mim King	
Elaine Kordys	Arnolfini
Simon Pascoe	Red Earth
Simon Poulter	PVA/ Media-Lab
Anthony Roberts	Colchester Arts Centre
Phillip Smith	Southern Arts
Mark Waugh	Arts Council of England
Jane Whitaker	

Minutes

- DB welcomed the participants. He noted that the meeting had come about through an informal national grouping of promoters wishing to address the uneven playing field for Live Art. He thanked the Arts Council and Regional Arts Boards for their support for the initiative. He concluded by introducing the meeting as an opportunity to think creatively about the future of Live Art.
- LK introduced the aims of the day and issues/questions for discussion:
 - How can Live Art artists and promoters be better resourced and empowered to do what they do?
 - How can the perception that the needs of Live Art are at odds with funding agendas be broken down?
 - How can funders be persuaded to see Live Art as a solution, not a problem?
 - How can the flexibility and inherent artform challenges of Live Art be better and more consistently 'placed' within the funding system?
 - How can the arts sector become equipped to deal with hybridity and the sophistication of practices?
 - What strategies might be adopted towards a more even playing field across regional borders?
 - What strategies might be adopted that respect the differing needs of artists and that recognize that “one size does not fit all”?

The potential to develop national partnerships and initiatives **Mark Waugh – Arts Council of England**

- MW outlined the difficulties of working with the structures of the Arts Council of England, and that he was not always able to achieve what he might want. He emphasised that just like artists and promoters, he had to work with the constraints of what is available and accessible. However, working within the funding structures allows for a rigorous negotiation of politics, and the possibility of advocating for the sector.

ACE and RAB mission statements tend to be broadly similar, but the priorities are open to drift and negotiation. This suits Live Art with its absence of fixity, and its product which is open to disappearance. The product is excitement and engagement, not “capital”.

MW outlined the experience of developing the *Shooting Live Artists* scheme with the BBC and developing commissions with Studio of the North. He discussed the process of sharing values between partners, then looking to how those values might fit with each partner organisation’s corporate aims, and negotiating where corporate aims don’t match the shared values. He suggested that working in partnership was of increasing importance to ACE’s approach.

MW referred to the quality of Live Art practitioners' funding applications and their clarity and sophistication when discussing work. With Live Art now placed within the Visual Arts Department of ACE, the quality of Live Art applications is impressive compared to those from other visual arts practitioners and this means Live Art is looked to as best practice.

MW cited Fierce Earth's *New Audiences Programme* project as an example of using Live Art practices to explore how non-art audiences perceive the arts are sold to them, and the sophistication of the consumer. He also discussed The New Art Gallery, Walsall working with La Ribot, and the importance of the gallery adapting its practices to allow the public permission into the unsettling and volatile aspects of Live Art. MW concluded by suggesting Live Art is well placed to ask the questions:

- What are the arts?
- What is the philosophy of the arts?
- Do the arts need to engage with radical difference?
- Who is the public for the arts?

A vision for a national network of artists Sophie Cameron – New Work Network

- SC introduced the work of the New Work Network. It was initiated in 1995 to enable practitioner networking; for sharing of ideas; to facilitate support; to advocate for practitioner needs; and to provide a forum within which the voice of the artist is integral. SC highlighted that NWN recognises that its development as a network needs to happen at an appropriate pace.

SC outlined NWN's aims and events profile, and highlighted that this was an ideal forum to encourage activity and input from the participants of the meeting. NWN is currently working towards a vision for a national network of artists. It is a national and inclusive organisation, both artist and sector led. It aims to develop positive links with funding bodies, and is a small fixed-term funded client of ACE.

SC highlighted a few of NWN's recent activities - including:

- *Live Late Review*. Peer assessment events linked to festivals.
- *The Chemistry Experiment* with Arnolfini Live. A series of debates about collaboration.
- Collating information for the sector.
- Specific professional development training on areas such as documentation, administration and marketing.
- Mentoring scheme for artists in eXpo (EMA-funded).
- Advocacy.

- NWN presence at festivals (building up the profile of NWN and increasing links with artists).

NWN is trying to create links and generate information and skills exchange for artists working within specific regions by creating regionally specific NWN meetings and then encouraging information and skills exchange between artists working within different regions. NWN aims to gather information from artists, identifying their specific professional development needs and use this information as a basis from which to form national strategy for creating relevant support structures for artists. SC highlighted the point that what is important to focus on within the network are the opportunities for members to be proactive within NWN.

- LK introduced two case studies which had been selected as a means to stimulate discussion. Both case studies were drawn from outside the participating regions to provide a broader national context for discussion.

Case Study One

Fierce Earth and West Midlands Art

Mark Ball and Mark Dey

- MD noted that four/five years ago West Midlands Arts considered the question of how to populate an unpopulated landscape of Live Art within the WMA region. MD chose not to create and work with a Live Art strategy but rather to work within the agendas of the WMA corporate aims of:
 - Access
 - Creative ambition
 - Profile of the Arts
 - Resources

These aims were analysed in relation to Live Art and the question arose as to why audiences were not engaging with interdisciplinary practice. To address this, WMA adopted a two pronged approach:

- The question of venue. Where would an audience go to view live work? Which venue would be able to host touring shows? There was the need to identify a venue that WMA already had a relationship with and that covered a diverse area of practice. It needed to be one that they were already supporting covering a diverse area of practice and have the opportunity to work across several platforms. For these reasons Warwick Arts Centre was selected.
- The question of support agency. The need to identify an organisation that would enable and encourage artists' practices to develop and grow. Fierce Earth was selected as it already had a history as a promoter and working with Live Artists. Fierce Earth was actively involved as a promoter, hosting an annual festival, and providing advice for artists.

The first activity was to conduct an audit of activity within the region to act as a benchmark of the areas of activity. The relationship between Warwick Arts Centre and Fierce Earth then generated an area of focus and critical mass within the region. It provided an arena for artists to discuss their practice and also offered networking opportunities and teaching around Live Art and in turn encouraged artists to stay in the region and develop their practice.

Fierce Earth aims:

- Provide basic information and advice service for artists and students.
- Provide professional developing schemes for artists (mentoring)
- Provide specific support to Warwick Arts Centre with programming and marketing advice.
- Facilitate a Higher Education promoters group for those operating within the region.
- Raise the profile of Live Art
- Develop venues/promoters/programmes and partnership programming
- Offer shadowing opportunities
- Audience development which is interested in the hybridity of practice

Case Study Two Colchester Arts Centre

- AR introduced himself as the Director of Colchester Arts Centre, a space that plays host to a mixed programme of events ranging from Live Art to Indie Rock gigs. The artistic policy is biased towards new work and innovation.

To date the region does not possess a great deal of Live Art activity and it was noted that there are few promoters engaging with this practice within region. AR agreed that the audit conducted by WMA appeared to be a useful model to adopt to conduct an area of research into this area to map the areas of activity.

AR was responsible for organising, 'Charge', a small festival at Colchester Arts Centre which included Lone Twin, Lisa Wesley, Philip Warnell and Otiose and Mark Jeffreys. AR was also responsible for the tour 'Crikey, Moses, Blimey' which toured to Cambridge, Stanford Arts Centre and the ICA working with artists, Peter Evans, Stacey Makishi, Lone Twin and Philip Warnell. AR noted that this was a useful model of how to develop successful regional tours within limited means ('Crikey, Moses, Blimey' had a touring budget of £2000).

Colchester Arts Centre received £45K from EEA last year and this budget has now been increased to £65K and EEA has asked Colchester Arts Centre to develop the presence of Live Art within the region but they have not been prescriptive about the direction to be taken.

Discussion

How can we work collectively towards building a more effectively resourced and empowered Live Art sector across the country?

- Delegates were asked to submit what they felt might be key challenges for discussion. LK welcomed the meeting back from lunch and outlined the issues that had been identified:
 - The role of Higher Education
 - higher education (artists and critical framework)
 - in relation to audiences
 - The sustainability of careers
 - from emergent to established
 - Partnerships/Networks/Collaborations/Information
 - Interdisciplinary
 - Regional/National
 - Infrastructure
 - The nature of practice: many forms = many sites/venues = many funding approaches
 - Short term thinking
 - the role of R&D
 - sustained policy/practice & provision
 - agenda led funding
 - Advocacy/representation
 - ourselves
 - audiences
 - funders
 - Talent drain
 - for region
 - for sector
 - Developing a practice
 - training
 - right to fail
 - process vs product
 - context
 - Venues/promoters/facilitators
 - supporting artists
 - presenting work (incl. national & international)

- The question of audiences
- Individual/organisational development
- Practical/social agendas vs. civil liberties
- The challenge of new media.

Regional groups, report back and summary

- Everyone was asked to divide into regional groups to look at some or all of the challenges and to discuss possible solutions in relation to their own practice, their region and the wider sector.

South East Arts

The focus of discussion was centred on:

- Venues
- Education
- Career sustainability

The group focussed on the idea of approaching an established guest curator/visiting promoter (e.g. The Arnolfini) to organise and promote a Live Art festival within the region. This was perceived as a necessary move because there is no one recognised as a 'champion' for Live Art within the region.

The question of establishing a link with Brighton Festival was discussed and it was agreed that a Live Art festival would need a separate strand and it's own identity but that Brighton Festival should be considered as an opportunity to build on as it is a recognised and established festival.

There was some discussion surrounding the geographical issues and the fact that Brighton is in close proximity to London.

There was discussion around the need to identify a specific venue for Live Art within the region as there is currently the issue of working in isolation and there is the need to view work. It was agreed that there was the need to claim back a dedicated space for Live Art within the region. There was some discussion around the idea of organising a platform for artists to showcase their work.

SEA will be holding a further meeting '100°C' with a wider practitioner group in November.

Southern Arts and South West Arts

The discussion was centred on:

- Venues – the need to work with more established venues.
 - Central and regional bodies need to identify specific and dedicated hybrid posts.
 - The need to encourage better national and international networking within an area of Live Art.
 - The need to work with artists over a greater period of time and build on this relationship.
 - Research the possibility of establishing a small touring funding scheme.
 - The need to identify and establish networks.
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- DB noted that the reports will be available on the Live Art Development Agency's website and raised the point that it is important to sustain the forum in the future.
 - DB also noted that Paul Godard (Theatre Officer with responsibility for Live Art at South West Arts) was unable to attend this meeting. Paul Godard would be willing to discuss the possibility of holding a further meeting for participants from the South West – participants from the South West were encouraged to take this further with Paul Godard.
 - Thanks were extended to all of those responsible for organising the event and to everyone attending.