

FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

THE ARTIST AND POWER

HUMILITY AND LEADING

AUTONOMY

CRITICALITY

PARTNERSHIP ORGANISATIONS



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On The Edge Research was launched by a major AHRC award in 2001. OTE is practice-led research. By this we mean that artistic practice is both a subject and a way of testing ideas and new approaches in the production of new knowledge through grounded, evidence-based experience. OTE frames and develops a space between the field of practice and the academic to support shared learning and public pedagogy. This space acknowledges that cultural landscapes are constantly changing. Learning and articulating the relevance of the artist's role through ongoing practice and research is therefore a constant, unfolding and dynamic dialogue. The OTE research programme is increasingly working within a national and international network of artists, writers and policy researchers. www.ontheedgeresearch.org

Cultural Enterprise Office (CEO) is Scotland's only specialist business development support service for Creative Businesses, Individual Artists and Industry Freelancers. It has four offices across Scotland – Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen – and is currently looking at expanding the service into new territories. It provides a high quality Advisory Service, up to the minute Industry Information and a Professional Development Programme of seminars and networking events to support the growth and development of the sector in Scotland. The service also provides training in core business skills such as Negotiation, Getting Started, Managing Finances and Portfolio Presentation. Developing leadership skills within the sector is currently a significant area of focus and investment in CEO's portfolio and remit. Leadership skills provide arts practitioners with the tools they need to sustain and grow their practice to make a significant contribution to the wider community. www.culturalenterpriseoffice.co.uk

PAL (Performing Arts Labs) creates cross-disciplinary development laboratories which produce radical thinking, collaborative practice and tangible results. PAL is a UK-based not-for-profit company devising unique international residential programmes over seventeen years. The company attracts talented practitioners across the creative industries; in the arts and architecture, in film, theatre, opera and music theatre, interactive media and new technologies, and in science, education and research. PAL identifies exceptional talents and challenges artists, scientists, educators, funding bodies and policy makers to extend the limits of their individual practice and to challenge the status quo. As of January 2007, PAL has acquired a growing talent pool of over 3,700 creative individuals, a proven methodology and a unique body of experience of 115 residential Labs held across the UK and abroad. *Artist as Leader*TM will enable PAL to broaden and deepen its practice and impact through identifying the core leadership skills of international artists working together with the decision makers from outside the arts who are engaged in this experimental programme. www.pallabs.org

Scottish Leadership Foundation (SLF) was launched in 2001 with a clear remit to focus on raising the quality of leadership in Scotland's public services in line with the new Scottish Parliament's modernising and Public Service Reform agenda. SLF has the specific remit to develop the leadership capacity and capability of all of Scotland's public services and whilst developing work on this wider remit, it has been giving particular support in the last year to Social Work and Mental Health services as they implement the new outcomes of the 21st Century Social Work review and the new Mental Health Act (Scotland). The SLF works closely with other leadership centres across the UK and internationally. www.slfscotland.com

INTRODUCTION



Artist as Leader is a programme that aims to understand the ways artists lead through their practice with a view to informing and developing a critical understanding of the role of creativity in culture. There are two complimentary parts to the Artist as Leader programme.¹ The first is the research which takes the form of in-depth interviews with a range of artists and managers who work with artists. The interviews focus on practice and the perceptions of the interviewees of 'leading through practice'. The second part is the development of a laboratory space. Over seventeen years Performing Arts Labs (PAL) has evolved a methodology for bringing together individuals increasingly from different disciplines, in the development of new work. The Lab draws together artists and policy makers with a view to exploring scenarios. The policy makers will offer their key challenges in the social, economic, cultural sphere within the next ten years as a basis for new collaborative work.

The research, which is across art forms, is being tested on a wide set of constituencies. With a-n's readership in mind, this publication focuses on the visual arts. This publication also comes during the research, not at its conclusion and its main motive is to lay out a typology of issues, substantiated by experience, with a view to enabling and encouraging debate. We have invited four contributions – Linda Frye Burnham, Reiko Goto, Francis McKee and Tim Nunn – to demonstrate a range of perspectives. The debate continues and is open to all online at www.a-n.co.uk

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CREDITS



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FRAMING THE DISCUSSION



Artists lead through their practice. One quality of experiencing art is that artists enable us to see the world differently. Our focus is on the ways in which this provides leadership. This is what we mean by leading through practice.

Currently, artists are increasingly choosing, or being called upon, to work more directly within social, cultural, economic and political processes. This is a trajectory that has a complex history in which art is increasingly active in the formulation of cultural processes.

The film *What age can you start being an artist?*³ gives an insight into Room 13, a project that has been running for a number of years in Caol Primary School, Fort William, Scotland.⁴ The film, broadcast on Channel 4, was made by some of the children involved in Room 13 working with Emma Davie, a professional film maker. The film is both about, and the result of, the specific creative dynamic of Room 13. Davie said:

“Room 13 is an art room within Caol Primary School, which encourages children to think creatively. Children are able to ask for permission to leave their other classes to use Room 13, if their class work is up to date – which it always seemed to be. The children are in charge of Room 13.”

Davie understands Room 13 to be a different sort of learning environment from a normal school environment. Her perception was that “the children were so much more engaged with the world around them and felt free to create work which genuinely reflected how they saw things – not how they ‘should’ see them. The art was cutting edge, bold and very unsentimental”. In characterising what she learned from working with the children Davie commented,

“People learn when the work is important. When you value something, people rise to it.”

She described what this meant more specifically:

“At the end of the day we’d look at what the children had shot. We’d ask, “Is it interesting, or is it boring?”, thumbs up, or thumbs down. They’d go out the next day and shoot more film. Often they had to get rid of the conventions of television to be able to see again. It was really quick, quick learning through doing.”

Davie also commented on the importance of the playfulness of working with children that was particularly evident in Room 13.

“A child would come up with a great idea whilst running out of the room and eating a sweetie. ... What was wonderful was to be with people who were genuinely playful.”

This in turn influenced the making of Davie’s film about the project. The film became an exchange of skills between herself as film maker and the young people.

Davie focuses on very specific aspects of making a film in collaboration with children. She focuses on the quality of the learning and creativity that resulted from the practice (of, in this case, film making) being the most important thing. She suggests that the practice, the need to produce a film of quality in this case, is the thing that is leading.

What is happening when the result of the artists’ practice is that children are working differently?

Allan Kaprow articulated the change in how and why art is made as ‘a blurring of art and life’.⁵ More recently this has been expressed by Kester and Bourriaud as a paradigm shift in aesthetics.⁶ Sheikh views artists as part of a political project, setting out to construct, and to a degree subvert, different notions of ‘public’.⁷ These different discourses are artist-centred.

However, the artist’s role has also become part of the political agenda of the creative and cultural industries. In this context it is policy that drives and shapes opportunities for artists to work within social/cultural processes.

Both these positions, artist-centred and policy-centred, frame deeply felt contradictions.

It is a gross simplification to create a polarity between the idea that artists should be free to act for themselves, and that artists have an important contribution to make to social, cultural and economic development.

Setting aside the political and policy reasons for addressing this subject now, in describing previous work we were challenged by the artist Newton Harrison to clarify and articulate artistic intervention, not as a process of asking for or giving permission, but as a process of the artist consciously leading.⁸

This is therefore an important moment to analyse in what sense artists lead. Contradictions will be a recurring theme within this publication. They assist in challenging and perhaps reframing in a more nuanced way the potential of art practice to inform the debate.

The leadership discussion

We are aware that within management, leadership is considered to be a key to organisational success. Models of leadership tend to draw on the business world and are assumed to have universal application. We are aware that this kind of organisational leadership is an issue in arts organisations, when currently the arts represent five per cent of the national economy. In challenging the dominance of transformational leadership theories, Dennis Tourish⁹, Professor of Leadership and Management, Aberdeen Business School, suggests:

“Traditionally, artists have followed an individualistic pathway, with a primary emphasis on personal creativity and autonomy. It is plausible that some of their approaches to leadership could contribute more to innovation, organisational learning and creativity than some of the conventional business wisdom allows.”¹⁰

There is significant literature demonstrating that creativity, like leadership, is being considered as an economic driver.¹¹

Within the Cultural Industries the major recent development has been the Clore Leadership Programme initiated by the Clore Duffield Foundation and subsequently supported by the Chancellor in response to the Cox Review¹². The Clore Leadership Programme is precisely aimed at the development of leader-managers for major cultural institutions. This is a mirroring of the focus on leadership in the business and industrial context. Chris Smith, who now heads up the Clore Leadership Programme, has acknowledged that there is a difference between this kind of organisational leadership and the way artists can make a significant contribution.¹³

We are concerned with the reality of practice. In unpacking the qualities and attributes of artists leading through their practice, we are testing the idea that artists are uniquely placed to mobilise thinking and creative development in public life.

The first complexity that arises when we start to talk about leading is around purposes. Is it the artist’s purpose to make representations of the world; to expose or reveal change; or to create change? If it is to create change, is that a process of solving problems, or empowering those involved in the work?

“What happened to the people who said ‘we will represent something in the world’? When did the artist start to say ‘we will change the world’?” Francis McKee¹⁴

¹ www.ahrc.ac.uk/awards/search_results.asp?grant=NWC

² The Lab element of Artist as Leader is trademarked – Artist as Leader™.

³ *What age can you start being an artist?*, made by Amy Cameron, Rosie Flannigan and Daniella Souness of Room 13 in collaboration with Emma Davie, Channel 4, 2004.

⁴ Room 13 has resulted from a long-term process of artists, primarily Rob Fairley, working with children at Caol Primary School, Fort William, Scotland. Children involved in Room 13 have won the Barbie Prize, and secured funding from amongst other sources, such as NESTA. There is now a network of Room 13s in the UK and internationally. See www.room13scotland.com for more information.

⁵ Kaprow, Allan and Kelly, Jeff (Eds), *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, University of California Press, 1993, 2nd Ed, 2003.

⁶ (Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics*, Les Presses du Reel, France, 2003; Kester, Grant, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, University of California Press, 2004.

⁷ Sheikh, Simon, various texts on Transversal: Multi-lingual Webjournal, European Institute of Progressive Cultural Policies, www.eipcp.net/transversal, 2004-2006.

⁸ The conversation took place at *Evolving the Future*, the Darwin Summer Symposium, Shrewsbury, 2005.

⁹ Tourish is a critical friend to the Artist as Leader research.

¹⁰ Tourish, Dennis, *Case for Support* funding application to the ESRC Sept 2006.

¹¹ For instance, *DTI Economics Paper No. 15: Creativity, Design and Business Performance*, HMSO, 2005.

¹² *Cox Review of Creativity in Business: Building on the UK’s Strengths*, HMSO, 2005.

¹³ At an Artist as Leader meeting, London 6 January 2006 Chris Smith he commented that you can never underestimate the contribution that artists can make to the leadership discussion.

¹⁴ Francis McKee interviewed by Chris Fremantle, 14 December 2006, Glasgow.

THE ARTIST AND POWER



Artists who accept the relevance of leading through practice seem to have an ambivalent relationship with power. The leadership discourse in business is becoming more self-critical but still favours heroic or celebrity models:

“Leaders have been referred to as idols (*The Economist*, 2002), heroes (Bennis, 1997; Collins, 2000; Raelin, 2003; Shelton, 1996); saviours (Khurana 2002); warriors and magicians (Tallman, 2003) and omnipotent and omniscient demi-gods (Gabriel, 1997; Noer, 1994)” (Morris, Brotheridge and Urbanski, 2005).

These models stand in stark contrast to the qualities that Linda Frye Burnham has discovered over thirty-five years of writing and publishing community art practice. A good artist-leader is “a cultural animator building and participating in community life”. He or she is an analyst able to “read situations rapidly and accurately” (Arlene Goldbard) thereby acknowledging expertise in people about their lives. He or she is a collaborator who “motivates others to share a vision” (Lee Ann Norman), a connector, an organiser, a revolutionary, a good negotiator, an entrepreneur and a lover (John Malpede). Such approaches are consistent with emerging perspectives on leadership, particularly associated with the Lancaster Leadership Centre¹⁵, which stress that followership is an indispensable part of the leadership equation, and which questions many traditional top down practices.

Frye-Burnham observes:

“When an artist seeks to lead others in making art, it is often in a spirit of social change: to help heal a community after a trauma, reach across a divide, bring generations closer together.”

In abandoning the heroic concept of leader, or the primacy of ‘author as sole creator’, we prioritise a different set of skills and competencies. We look to the artist to think strategically and go beyond the ‘brief’. Bob Last, film producer and entrepreneur, commented on the importance of intellectual ambition in art,

“In my mind there is some sort of misunderstanding of what it is to be an artist that leads to ... the thought that self-effacing practice, or objects, or a lack of ambition to influence is in itself a heroic refusal or worthy thing... [That] is some strange and conflicted construction of the artist’s role against the popular.”¹⁶

Bob Last suggested an interesting example of leading through practice. He focuses on individuals in the film industry whose roles do not gain the headlines. He highlighted Thelma Schoonmaker who regularly works with Martin Scorsese. Last commented that Schoonmaker is able to intuitively retain a map of multiple and overlapping rhythms over ninety minutes, and that this is one of the key characteristics of Scorsese’s films.

Last goes on to focus on one of the contradictions at the heart of any discussion about the power of art to enable us to see the world differently.

“An artist’s practice provides leadership in terms of constantly re-examining the world. The problem that dogs this sense of leadership is perhaps that it is not the case that the majority of people want a life where we are constantly re-examining what that life means.”¹⁷

Artist/Organisations

One of the most important historical examples of artists seeking to influence policy is the Artists’ Placement Group (APG). APG was established by John Latham and Barbara Steveni in the late 1960s and continued through into the early 1980s. APG was a radical social experiment engaging artists in non-art situations, and it moved the art towards a different power base where artists

¹⁵ The Lancaster Leadership Centre is one of the UK’s top centres for research and teaching in the field of leadership studies. It is located within the Lancaster University Management School, which has scored a 5* in there last three consecutive RAEs. A prestigious new journal, *Leadership*, has been launched by two of the Centre’s main professors. Professor Tourish is on the journal’s editorial board, is co-editing a special edition of the journal on Communication and Leadership, and has published with one of its two editors, Professor David Collinson. He has also presented a research seminar at the Centre.

¹⁶ Bob Last interviewed by Chris Fremantle and Tim Nunn, 31 October 2006, Glasgow.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 2006.

McKee’s first observation is that artists offer a new conception to the world manifested through an object or a performance, ie they make representations of the world.

Tim Nunn expresses the potential for the artist to lead and have influence without necessarily setting out to do so:

“It may be an artist has been personally motivated to work in the natural environment and that the consequent art has stirred an appreciation of the complexity of nature and motivated protection of the environment. Or a composer has instinctively incorporated elements of folk music into a contemporary composition that has provoked a challenge to the value of tradition. Or a poet has made someone laugh when describing a sexual act and made that person realise something about her or his inhibitions.”

Whilst acknowledging the resonance of Tim Nunn’s observations, McKee, and we also, understand that some artists are increasingly interested in working to reveal and expose change, and, going beyond even that, to create change in the world.

So let us offer an articulation that embraces both conscious and unconscious forms of artists leading through practice. Some artists are creating conditions which we as participants, inhabit for a while. Through this process we achieve a heightened awareness of the circumstances of our particular lives. As a result we may go further and engage in change.

If we accept this complexity, we believe that there are a number of nuances around which artists orientate themselves differently. These are explored in four broad thematic areas: The Artist and Power, Humility and Leading, Autonomy, and Criticality.

were not just embellishing. Their value as artists was palpable within the day-to-day business of various organisations.

APG marks out a territory in which the artist was given maximum freedom to engender creativity at any level of non-artistic organisations, often investing creativity where it was least expected. Grant Kester's analysis of APG places emphasis on the durational aspects of this work. John Latham explained the value of the artist in organisational contexts as lying precisely in their capacity to think through the long-term implications of actions within timescales that were far greater and more complex than the short-term expedient problem-solving of the market. APG placed artists within British Steel, the Scottish Office, the Department of Health in London, and the Department of the Environment in Birmingham. These placements resulted in a variety of 'works', but the true legacy lies in the opening up of expectation in and around the role of the artist. Although at times highly contentious, APG's programme led to an official memorandum from the British Civil Services in 1972 encouraging government agencies to involve artists in their activities.

APG, radical in its time, has in many ways established one model for how artists might work within organisations. This model has the potential to invert the conventional relationship between the artist and organisational power, but its application in real terms is problematic. Artists are rarely salaried (though within the APG programme they were). In practice this excludes them from certain sorts of processes. Rob Laycock, who has recently taken over as Director of Helix Arts¹⁸, noted precisely this point¹⁹. Artists are effectively excluded from certain networking and training programmes aimed at supporting emerging leaders. These programmes are aimed at the long-term good of society, and largely rely on participants being sponsored by their employers. This exclusion points to the gap between the rhetoric of creative industries and the realities of practice in the field.

Where artists develop a successful project that could iterate or grow and extend, they are often faced with becoming the managers at the expense of their own artistic practice. Laycock is employed to lead and manage Helix Arts. He is also a practising artist. He acknowledged that although he brings a great deal of creativity to his role as Director, his practice as artist is consciously separated from his practice as manager/leader. The fact that an artist within an organisation is faced with such choices indicates that there is a tension between artistic conventions and leadership conventions. In other cases this constitutes a dilemma.

Paul Carter was the lead artist in the Edge FM project. This project was one of five in the first phase of On the Edge, developed in partnership with the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses (2001-4). Edge FM involved a group of young people from Fraserburgh working with Carter over a two-month period to create a radio station. They developed the branding, applied for a short-term community license, interviewed inhabitants of Fraserburgh on their perceptions of Fraserburgh as 'home', recorded material and developed a broadcast. In this and in other projects, Carter clearly demonstrated leading through his practice. Carter understood that the role of the artist lay in mobilising young people to form self-organising groups that then gave those young people the power to address issues that affected their circumstances. He understood that it was not the role of the artist to sustain and lead the groups as might be found in conventional youth work models. His intervention was consciously time limited and also consciously linked with radio as a medium.

"Being a tool, [radio's] use can change, the messages it carries can change. ... Edge FM, as an art project, has a legacy in the continuing discussions and arguments about the culture of Fraserburgh and the position young Brochers²⁰ have within culture."²¹ (Carter 2004)

Carter's insistence on intervening creatively as a temporary, time-limited action contrasts in some aspects with the long-term commitment that Suzanne Lacy has made to developing work with the community of Oakland California over ten years (1990-2000).

Lacy views scale and long-term commitment as crucial to her approach.

"Each project grew out of youth concerns expressed in the prior [project], and each positioned youth in leadership roles. Taking place over ten years of increasing hostility toward youth of colour in urban cities, the projects... feature efforts by hundreds to capture the imagination of thousands, in an effort to demystify 'youth'. Taken together, these projects on public education, pregnancy and health care, public policy, police abuse, and youth participation in civic life represent a sustained and developed exploration of the practice and theory of community-based public art."²²

Through the act of departure, Carter places the energy of the experience within the lives of the participants. The artist is ephemeral and redundant once the task of mobilising the energy of the young people is complete. In staying, Lacy consolidates and grows awareness of the issues through the sheer duration and scale of the numbers of people who are reached and their power to effect change. Both seek to transfer the power of leadership to the young people and away from the artist.

18 www.helixarts.com

19 Robert Laycock interview by Anne Douglas and Chris Fremantle, 24 November 2006, Newcastle.

20 Brocher – someone who comes from or lives in Fraserburgh.

21 Carter, Paul, *Edge FM, On The Edge Research*, 2004.

22 Lacy, Suzanne, *Imperfect Art: Working in Public: A case study of a ten-year project in Oakland, California*, book proposal, 2006.

HUMILITY AND LEADING



23 Morris, Andrew J, Brotheridge, Celeste M, Urbanski, John C, *Bringing humility to leadership: Antecedents and consequences of leader humility*, Human Relations, Volume 58 (10), 1232-1250, The Tavistock Institute, SAGE Publications, 2005.

24 Neville, Mark, 2004-2005.

25 Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum Publishing, 1970, 2nd Ed, Penguin 1993.

26 Harrison, Helen Mayer, and Harrison, Newton, *A Vision for the Green Heart of Holland*, 1994-95.

27 Newton Harrison, Public lecture, Gray's School of Art, 24 March, 2006.

Morris, Brotheridge and Urbanski, in developing their case for humility as a key characteristic of leadership, identify the three aspects that constitute humility as the “ability to understand one’s strengths and weaknesses”, “willingness to learn from others”, and “exceeding one’s usual limits [to] forge a connection to a larger perspective”.²³

Reiko Goto echoes this from within her own writing.

“I am in a forest with many people. We are moving in a consistent direction, led by someone but there is no way for me to see the trail in front of us. I feel the warmth of someone’s hand in my own hand and the kindness of someone’s voice who occasionally guides us.... After the experience even though I am not an expert, my values have changed. I care deeply. I am amongst others who have also learned. We are all moving through the world and at some level are also blind. At the end of the exploration can we tell who the leader was? Is it important?”

Goto suggests that the experience of the journey is more significant than the identity of the guide. She does not wish to articulate herself as leader. She focuses on what the artist does and not their perceived status and influence.

Mark Neville undertook a public art project in Port Glasgow which resulted in the production of, amongst other things, a book.²⁴ The aim of the project was to capture a year in the life of Port Glasgow, though not as ‘straight’ social documentary. Neville describes the challenges, as a middle class Englishman, undertaking a project within one of the most deprived areas of post-industrial urban Scotland. He spent a year learning about Port Glasgow before he was able to realise the output. At the conclusion he distributed the book only to the people of Port Glasgow. Where Goto might suggest the journey having its own form, Neville set out with a clear form in mind, and discovered how to inhabit that form in a different way.

These examples articulate an entirely different persona of the artist or leader from one based on the charismatic. There is a sense in which both artists acknowledge a need for self-knowledge as well as a dependence upon other individuals in the process. The quality of their engagement is learning, rather than knowing and presenting. Paulo Freire explores the same point through the notion of false charity.²⁵ Speaking in the context of a public pedagogy, he notes that understanding/learning must come from the ‘oppressed’ and not be given by the ‘oppressors’. New learning arises from us critically recognising the causes of oppression and thereby gaining the energy and reason to expel the myths of the old order through transformative action. The energy must come from the individual’s desire for change, from overcoming the fear of change, a process that cannot be led by ‘an oppressor’. It is an act of love and not of generosity.

Although Rob Fairley would probably not describe pupils in Caol Primary School as ‘oppressed’, nor the teachers as ‘oppressors’, the way Room 13 seems to work assumes precisely that the pupils use the space to determine their own purposes.

AUTONOMY



The traditional conception of the artist, particularly evident in Modernism, is of the creative and autonomous individual. In our case studies the artist is operating with autonomy, but is also operating within groups, teams, and social contexts. In these cases autonomy is not also isolation. Rather one might argue that a key aspect of the work of these artists is to encourage those they work with to develop their own autonomous thinking.

Helen Mayer and Newton Harrison’s approach to ecological challenges is rooted in an understanding of the need to create space for reflection on the personal dimension of bio-regional problems. They frame their work in terms of changing the beliefs of people about their relationship with the environment around them, looking not at control, but rather at co-existence.

In responding to an invitation by the Cultural Council of South Holland²⁶ to advise them on the proposed development of 600,000 new houses for the centre of Holland, the Harrisons recognised the cultural significance of Holland’s ‘Green Heart’ – the area of farming encircled by its major cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Den Haag, Delft. They developed a proposal that focused on the ‘Green Heart’ as an icon that in turn articulated a set of principles and limitations. The proposal was warmly welcomed, and then abandoned with a change of government. After five years the proposal was revisited on the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Forestry. Newton Harrison takes up the story:

“We found out that what they had done is – and this is a stunning thing – they had dismantled our icon... but they had accepted the working principles: that major cities will be separated by parkland, their way. The ecosystems will be made continuous, but in their way. Their way was not to make a biodiversity ring, but to widen the rivers, and in so doing, make long continuous bands ...

We found that we were really successful in a new way. We started to design our work differently. When we designed our work, we would invent our icon. The icon would explain the work. It would be powerful in the sense that icons are. But, to enable and enact this work, we made it so that it was able to be recreated, redesigned and dismantled and put together again.”²⁷

What the Harrisons promote through their work is not the traditional artists’ autonomy, but the ability for every individual touched by the work to think about their environment in new, perhaps autonomous, ways.

CRITICALITY



Writing on the changing nature of European politics and culture, Marina Garcés raises the issue of criticality, proposing it as an embodied practice.²⁸ She explores a shift from critique as a practice of debating questions, to a new relationship based in the need to take our highly evolved critical understanding of the world into practice.

“To embody critique means to ask how to subvert one’s life nowadays in such a way that the world can no longer remain the same.”²⁹

Taking understanding into action is dependent upon seeing that we are profoundly interconnected with the world. The notion of ‘I’ is emancipated. It becomes ‘we’, integrated into a networked society in which we see ourselves in relation to ‘the other’, a part of the world rather than a consumer of it. Our individual experience is a starting point for immersing or drowning ourselves in ‘actual experience’, actively seeking relationships and connections.

It is noticeable how many of the artists we have discussed start with a deep analysis based on their own immersion and relationships with specific circumstances. This is evident in the work of the Harrisons, Lacy, Carter and Goto and Collins. APG formalised this through the concept of an ‘open brief’ – a three-month period in which the artist and host organisation established the grounds for further work through open-ended exploration, without obligation on either side. The work had to emerge from the relationship. The Harrisons describe this in relation to their own practice as a process of design – of designing an icon that is the vehicle for thinking differently. The icon is a starting point to creating change. It will itself change.

Leading through practice in this sense is intentionally not providing the solution or resolution within a piece of work. It is often characterised by an absence of a ‘resolution’ or ‘artefact’. Artefacts may appear as part of the process. It is an embodied critique because to understand requires us to experience by participating in the process that the artist initiates. It can be fun, absurd even, or mischievous. People often comment ‘I was expecting more art’.

McKee highlights circumstances in which the relevance of making art at all as a way of creating change is questioned. The artists themselves acknowledge that despite this lack of power to create change, they sustain a belief that being present is ‘necessary and useful’.

CONCLUSION



The main motive in this publication is to lay out a typology of issues, substantiated by experience, with a view to enabling and encouraging debate. The debate will continue online at www.a-n.co.uk provide fuller web reference in text

The idea of the artist leading through practice resonates in complex ways with a wide range of practitioners. Some recognise themselves, and others resist the idea of leading. Some are concerned that leading implies hierarchies, and others specifically want to engage with hierarchies and influence policy. Perhaps most importantly, some lead without setting out to do so.

We could say that one of the qualities of artists leading through their practice is intentionality – that the artists know what they are setting out to do – but this is immediately contradicted – even in our own experience in *On The Edge*. Perhaps the real point emerges through the learning, and not the intentionality.

We ourselves seek to engage in this debate from a position of criticality: we are concerned with the framework of creative industries, precisely because of the lack of acknowledgement of the conditions of practice, the gap between rhetoric and practice, and the assumptions that the artist can deliver, uncritically, on political priorities.

To this end it is important that, although we have focused on certain forms of practice, these are not read as ‘the best’, the only ones that are relevant, or ‘to be prioritised’.

In setting out this typology of issues we have referred to aspects of the ‘leadership debate’. What comes through the examples that we have given is that artists do lead through their practice. The examples don’t neatly fit into categories within the management debate about leadership, though this debate is changing and becoming more nuanced. David Butler goes further. Reflecting on the recent history of the arts, he argues specifically against becoming embroiled in models from business:

“We are forced to use models from the outside, when actually our practices are very good.

... [thinking back to the 1980s and 1990s] it was exactly the time that large commercial organisations were moving to more flat hierarchies, and beginning to talk about creativity. But we were being encouraged to shift our practice to use top down business planning. It’s almost like these business models were lying around unused and we were being given them as ‘cast offs’.

I think that’s a real issue, still. When you then try to unpack something like leadership you don’t try and say ‘here are a number of models’ (off the shelf). What you need to be saying is, “What is it that we are actually doing?”³⁰

We started with an open question: can artists offer something different to the issue of leadership?

The world around us is changing and artists’ practice is changing. In fact at any point where you try and describe practice as one thing, you immediately think of a counter example. It’s important that there is example and counter example because it’s important that people have a say in what they think is art. Artists are interacting with the world and learning. Assumptions are being tested along the route.

Anne Douglas and Chris Fremantle

²⁸ Garcés, Marina, *To Embody Critique*, Critique, Transversal: Multi-lingual Webjournal, European Institute of Progressive Cultural Policies, 2006.

²⁹ Ibid, 2006.

³⁰ David Butler interviewed by Anne Douglas and Chris Fremantle, 24 November 2006, Newcastle.

CALLING THE MEETING: ARTISTS AS LEADERS

1 Burnham, Linda Frye, "Telling and Listening in Public: The Sustainability of Storytelling," 2001 www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2001/02/telling_and_lis_3.php

2 Posner, Richard, "Professional Jaywalker: Richard Posner on Crossing from the Studio to Public Art," 1996, 2002 www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2002/09/professional_ja.php

3 Monagan, Susan, "The Artmaker as Active Agent: Six Portraits," 2006 www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archive/monagan/index.php

4 Burnham, Linda Frye, "Telling and Listening in Public: Factors for Success," 2001 www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2001/02/telling_and_lis_2.php

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7 Goldbard, Arlene, "Don't Do It! Organizational Suicide Prevention for Progressives," 2004 www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2004/09/donot_do_it_org.php

8 Cocke Dudley, Harry Newman and Janet Salmon-Rue, "A Matrix Articulating the Principles of Grassroots Theater," 1992, in Burnham, Linda Frye Burnham, "A Question of Values," 2000, www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2000/02/a_question_of_v.php

9 Burnham, ibid.

"Spirit in community will die unless there's someone calling the meeting."

Cultural organiser Theresa Holden¹

"The ability to navigate the currents and eddies of the public-art administrative process requires the eye of a journalist, the ear of a poet, the hide of an armadillo, the serenity of an airline pilot and the ability to swim."

Artist Richard Posner²

When an artist seeks to lead others in making art, it is often in a spirit of social change: to help heal a community after trauma, reach across a divide, bring generations together.

Over the past thirty-five years I have been asking artists working in communities what defines a successful artist-leader. Here, gleaned from writing posted on The Community Arts Network, is some of what they had to say.

A good artist-leader is:

A CULTURAL ANIMATOR

"'Animation' is derived from the French 'animation socio-culturel' and refers to the work of the animateur, a community worker who helps people to build and participate in community life, to articulate their own grievances and aspirations in a public context, and often, to make art from the material of their daily lives."

Cultural critics Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard³

Someone who can "build relationships and common goals. Someone to bring people together who normally don't interact, work under different conditions or institutional systems, and have different styles and approaches to the work, but are all attempting to strengthen the community through participatory and locally directed means."

Community cultural organiser Erica Kohl⁴

"The community animateur is an essential part of the mix: the role requires an unusual combination of skill, energy, sensitivity, courage, vision, love and limitless good humour. There must be a passion for collaboration and the ability to embrace all the human messiness that comes with the territory. There must be a deep respect for the power of story to reveal ourselves to each other; to illuminate the connective tissue of human experience."

Community theatre artist Kate Magruder⁵

"I don't care what you call it – animateur, cheerleader – it functions in the same way. ... smart, passionate about the work, charming, has the strength of ten, lots of flirting, but with an edge, a confluence of talent and influence ... with a big account in the favour bank."

Artist/consultant Lisa Mount⁶

ANALYTICAL

"...people who can read situations rapidly and accurately as a basis for strategic decisions – who have what Isaiah Berlin called a 'sense of reality'. It needs people who can articulate resonant aims, inspiring and galvanising action, people who can act responsibly as emissaries."

Arlene Goldbard⁷

Successful leaders "recognise that management structures and business practices are value-laden; they affect the mission, goals and creative processes of organisations through their structure and practices, self-reliance and collective responsibility."

The Grassroots Matrix⁸

"...the dilemma of integrity in artmaking and organising is around the gap between what I know and do and what they know and do in a particular field. I assume that they are the experts about their lives and communities, and I try to find out what they already know. I need to own my expertise and its usefulness in that community."

Artist/scholar Ann Kilkelly⁹

INCLUSIVE

"The people who are the subjects of the work are part of its development from inception through presentation."

The Grassroots Matrix¹⁰

The artist knows that participants must "enter fully into the role of co-directors of the project, making substantial and uncoerced contributions to shaping all aspects of the work and setting their own aims for the project."

Adams and Goldbard¹¹

COLLABORATIVE

“Hierarchy often takes a back seat to necessity, and collective decision making is much more the norm. With few material resources, ... collective knowledge and connections became an important resource. To make space for the free flow of expertise and information, these leaders have learned how to step back and step up, depending on the situation.” BC (EC) Bill Cleveland, Centre for the Study of Art and Community²²

“Leadership is not about doing everything from start to finish, from idea to plan to product. It’s about motivating others to share in a vision to create something that is larger than anything you could do on your own, as individual parts. I think I’ve failed if I haven’t raised someone up, if I haven’t ‘reproduced myself,’ if I haven’t passed on knowledge, relationship, skill, if I haven’t grown in my own learning from that process, that interaction.”

Community artist Lee Ann Norman¹³

CONNECTED

“Working closely with key people in the community is necessary. Sometimes it’s been nurtured for years.”

Artist/scholar Jan Cohen-Cruz⁴

The successful artist-leader “has played an ongoing civic role in the community by participating on various development and education commissions, and has a firm base from which to build and sustain their project.”

Activist/organiser Caron Atlas⁵

ORGANISED

The artist-leader has “vision, unstoppable perseverance and willingness to learn. Organisation of the sponsoring body must be constantly worked at to meet changing situations and personnel. Structure is the key to this.”

Bill Grow, Swamp Gravy Institute⁶

“I think of it as a listener, facilitator, and as a translator role, and from that it can move into a catalyst. I think that the cultural organiser needs to be rooted – in the creative work, culture and community context.”

Caron Atlas⁷

FLEXIBLE

“Flexibility in structure is also key, with the anticipation from the outset that ‘something bad will happen and this will test the strength and resiliency of the project.’”

William Cleveland⁸

“These programmes have organisational structures and leadership that are resilient, adaptive and improvisational. understanding that both form and freedom are necessary for integrating creative inquiry and community development.”

William Cleveland⁹

A REVOLUTIONARY

[Speaking of Augusto Boal] ... a practical theatre artist works out of a Marxist scheme where there is no real distinction between an artist and a social worker – a social activist/revolutionary who works as a facilitator, enabling workers/families to address cultural conflicts through theatre and thereby redress or solve them.”

Community artist/poet Grady Hillman²⁰

A GOOD NEGOTIATOR

“As survivors, the leaders of the programmes in this study successfully navigated a complex cross-sector environment of funding, regulation and public policy. ... Their survival also demanded a clear and forceful articulation of mission that translated to the self-interest of multiple partners. It is important to note that all of these programmes were created by artists who were, in essence, self-mandated. Put simply, that mandate was a passionate belief in the power of art to make significant positive contributions to community life. This was, and remains, a hard sell. To gain any credibility in the skeptical, even adversarial, territory they occupied, they had to marshal resources, advocate effectively and produce results, simultaneously. This seat-of-the-pants challenge was a hothouse for the development of effective community leadership.

William Cleveland²²

ENTREPRENEURIAL

“...opportunistic, investing their often meager resources in programmes and partnerships that have provided significant return. ... Community accountability tempers the vision of assertive leaders so that the work is honest, on track and relevant.

William Cleveland²²

A LOVER

“Once I asked John [Malpede] if there was an answer to the complex spiritual problems surrounding homelessness, and he told me the answer is ‘big infusions of love’ through lots more projects like his [Los Angeles Poverty Department]. Souls are saved. I’ll testify.”

Linda Frye Burnham²³

Linda Frye Burnham is a writer who specialises in community-based arts. She is co-director of Art in the Public Interest, a non-profit organisation in North Carolina, USA, and of the Community Arts Network website. She was founder of *High Performance* magazine and co-founder of the 18th Street Arts Complex and Highways Performance Space, all in Los Angeles, California.

All citations appear on the Community Arts Network: www.communityarts.net

10 Cocke Dudley, Harry Newman and Janet Salmon-Rue, “A Matrix Articulating the Principles of Grassroots Theater,” 1992, in Burnham, Linda Frye Burnham, “A Question of Values,” 2000, www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2000/02/a_question_of_v.php

11 Burnham, “Telling and Listening in Public: Factors for Success”

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13 Norman, Lee Ann, and Arlene Goldbard, “Minding the Gap: A Cross-Generational Dialogue, Part I,” 2006 www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2006/06/minding_the_gap_1.php

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THE ARTIST AS A LEADER



A leader is best

**When people barely know that he(she) exists,
Not so good when people obey and acclaim him(her).
'But of a good leader, who talks little,
When his (her) work is done, his (her) aim fulfilled,
They will all say, "We did this ourselves."**

Lao Tzu Quoted in J. Jacobs, (1992) *Systems of Survival*, Vintage Books, A division of Random House, Inc., New York, P.125)

I can't really talk about leadership, I can talk about change. I can talk about what it means to do things ourselves. Tim Collins, my partner, and I lived in Pittsburgh USA between 1994 and 2005. We focused upon art, ecology and environment projects as artists and researchers at Carnegie Mellon University. Nearby there is a stream called Nine Mile Run that has been suffering from human impacts for over one hundred years. It runs through a major natural park in the city. Residents have been complaining about leaking sewers, horrible smells and posted warning signs that indicated the water was unsafe for recreational use. City officials made a plan to put that stream in a pipe and bury it. When I went to see the stream for the first time, I did not see the fish in the water. But I did see a newly emerged Tiger Swallowtail butterfly flying along the stream, my partner saw deer tracks in the wet mud, we saw wild ducks in a pool. If that stream were buried it would be hard to bring it back to any sort of original condition. I asked myself how artists might help change this.

We met many people who had worked on the stream in the past. Dr Mary Kostalos taught us about water chemistry and its relationship to the life in the stream. She introduced us to her mentor, Dr Jan Sykora, who in turn introduced us to Michael Koryak. These scientists guided us to understand that water was not only for human beings but also other creatures as well. That stream had a human family that had cared for it and studied it for years. Yet that stream was to be buried.

One snowy morning Dr Sykora, who was a biology professor at the University of Pittsburgh, took us to a natural park. There was a small clean spring in the park that fed into Nine Mile Run. He showed us how to flip rocks in the shallow water, and examine them for life. We found small translucent shrimp like creatures, wiggling under the rocks. He explained to us they were gammerus (*Hyalella azteca*), crustaceans, small creatures that lived on the bottom of shallow streams and ponds. They swim on their sides with seven pairs of legs. We flipped another rock, and found one of these small creatures holding the other's curved back. Another group of them seemed to be snuggling together in the cold water Dr Sykora said that they mate during winter. We asked what they would eat. He told us that gammerus ate dead leaves, twigs, and other organic matter. In the stream he picked something up and put it in my hand. It seemed to be a dead leaf. I spread out the leaf on my hand. I found it was not an ordinary leaf, but an example of the finest natural lace, it had been made by these bottom dwellers. None of the veins were broken. Dr Sykora replaced the creatures we had collected very carefully back into the water. He told us these small creatures were not only an indicator of good water quality, but that they keep their living environment healthy.

Gammerus is a small part of the chain of organisms that make up stream ecology. It is easy to say we are all connected. But it is hard to feel how we are connected. I became connected to that place through my friends and their relationships with small creatures. It is naive to say that I wanted to save them and their stream. I could not stop imagining the scenes of the little creatures cleaning up their living place, creating beautiful objects, and then being lost downstream in the rushing waters of Nine Mile Run during storm events. If I collected those lacy

leaves, framed and presented them in a gallery, some people might see them as an art object. It was not the object that was important. What struck me was the way the object represented the story of its makers and their homes. But to access that story you would need to have had the experience that I had with my friends and the little creatures; of water, air, light, trees, shrubs, rocks, mud, fish, salamanders, birds, deer, and raccoons. There was a spectrum of topography, life forms, sounds and seasonal changes; these were all elements of that environment. The aesthetic was embedded in the experience that my partner and I had on the snowy morning with the scientist. The story of gammerus would end if the relationship between the springs and a healthy stream was permanently lost. I wondered if a new story was possible, how people might intervene in that environment.

Change is never certain. People are not comfortable when they do something new. Even when there is a successful example in front of them, people often say, "Yes, but this region is different. We don't do things that way here." Creating change is like going through an unknown forest with a blindfold on. People are afraid of getting lost, or falling and being hurt, or maybe they fear being left behind.

I am in a forest with many people. We are moving in a consistent direction, led by someone but there is no way for me to see the trail in front of us. I feel the warmth of someone's hand in my own hand and the kindness of someone's voice who occasionally guides us. I hear the sounds of the forest and the breathing and talking of people I care about. These guides are like my friends in Pittsburgh: each of them showed me more and more of that place where the little creatures lived. After the experience, even though I am not an expert, my values have changed – I care deeply. I am amongst others who have also learned; we can share this with other people who come later. We are all moving through the world, and on some level we are all blind. At the end of the exploration can we tell who the leader was? Is it important? Once people reach the end of the forest, some people go into another new forest, and others might stay to tell the story of what we have all accomplished together.

Reiko Goto lives in the West Midlands, and works as a PhD candidate with the On the Edge Programme, at Robert Gordon University. Her research focuses upon art, ecology and its impacts upon public places and policies. Reiko has been recognised for her achievements in applied research in art and ecology from 1994-2005. She co-directed the Nine Mile Run and the 3 Rivers 2nd Nature projects; and is a "distinguished research fellow" at the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry at Carnegie Mellon University. Reiko is currently working with Tim Collins, to develop *The Secret Life of Trees: a Biogenic Opera for British Cities*.
<http://slaggarden.cfa.cmu.edu>
<http://3r2n.cfa.cmu.edu>



“What happened to the people who said ‘we will represent something in the world’? When did artists start to say ‘we will change the world’?”

It’s not as if artists have refused to confront political issues in the past – James Gillray’s *Blood on Thunder fording the Red Sea* or Francisco Goya’s *El Tres de Mayo de 1808 en Madrid* certainly tackled important events. The emphasis in art, however, remained on the re-presentation of the world and its material objects until the twentieth century. That balance between representation and information changed decisively in the 1960s, following through on a series of artistic revolutions in the twentieth century. Often it was war that drove this change. The First World War had a devastating effect on artists’ faith in their objects to transform by means of beauty. Ezra Pound summed up this crisis in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*:

**There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization,

Charm, smiling at the good mouth,
quick eyes gone under earth’s lid,

For two gross of broken statues,
For a few thousand battered books.**

WW2 and the Spanish Civil War reinforced this shift in sensibility and by the sixties protest against the Vietnam war was taking place at a time when artists were also questioning commodification (and the commodification of their work) in society.

Since then the relationship between politics and art has remained one of the key issues in the contemporary art world. Most recently, a project instigated in Ramallah has highlighted its continued urgency. ‘Liminal Spaces’, co-curated by Eyal Danon, Galit Eilat, Reem Fadda and Philipp Misselwitz, is an initiative born out of the frustrations and hardships of the current Palestinian situation. The organisers describe their aims as follows:

In March 2006, the project invited Palestinian, European and Israeli artists, architects, academics and film makers to examine the condition of everyday space, borders, physical segregation, cultural territories within a reality of occupation and challenge the possibilities of art as a catalyst for political and social change. The focus of the project is the radically divided and fragmented urban region of Jerusalem/Ramallah, which has become a laboratory for an urbanism of radical ethnic segregation. Curators, cultural figures and artists developed this project through a series of meetings and discussions that sought to generate a more active political engagement of the art sector. Additionally, it is hoped that through participation in the project, new possibilities of contact and exchange will emerge on an individual basis and beyond.

The reality of this project was of course harsher. With a fire destroying the Palestinian art centre’s facilities, the opening conference for the project was held in an empty furniture shop on the edge of the Qalandiya refugee camp. That meeting went well with a genuine bond being established among all the participants.

On the final day, however, an excellent talk from Charles Esche on the importance of ambiguity in art provoked everyone present into asking stark questions about the role of art and politics. Surrounded by the immediate and desperately urgent situation in Palestine, some artists felt there could be no place for ambiguity. Clear injustice called for clear condemnations. Others felt ambiguity and even oblique strategies were viable and perhaps necessary in a situation where there were so many

media pressures with predictable, stereotypical uses of military imagery and so many political complexities. Over the whole debate loomed a much larger question – would making artwork at this time change anything?

That conference ended on these bleak notes. It seemed there would be no clear way forward. A second conference, however, was arranged for October, this time to be held in Leipzig. There, more debate ensued but the real surprise lay in the exhibition that accompanied the sessions. It was clear that in the intervening eight months all of the artists had begun projects based on the original aims of ‘Liminal Spaces’. Some were direct – video observation of a checkpoint and the endless delays and humiliations created there – some were oblique – an exploration of Israeli sperm donor rules which forbid Jewish men to donate while allowing Palestinian men to contribute. Several of the works were still in progress and a few dwelt on the bureaucracy and mental blocks that suppressed creativity in the region. Peter Friedl’s attempt to transport a giraffe from Palestine, for instance, revolved around a series of letters documenting the labyrinth of requests necessary. Superflex chose a route that was miraculously both profound and frivolous – persuading the Palestinian Authority to sanction an application for entry to the Eurovision Song Contest.

There was still no clear consensus but the movement to making and a reliance on practice rather than words was a significant gesture by all of the artists. There was no idealistic vision that this process would change anything but some shared belief that it was still necessary and useful. Perhaps a sense that a mental space could be opened up through the works and the conferences which permitted thoughts to be expressed or challenged in ways not possible on the ground in either Israel or Palestine.

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Postscript

In a completely unrelated situation in 2006 the leader of the revolutionary Zapatista insurgency movement, Subcomandante Marcos, co-wrote a detective novel with the Mexican author Paco Ignacio Taibo II. It was the most recent of a series of actions that seemed to place art before military action – an invitation/challenge to the Inter Milan football team, the regular appearance of a chicken dressed as a penguin in the Zapatista heartland of Chiapas and the emergence of a sensibility influenced as much by the Situationists as Che Guevara. In a description of Mexico City for instance Marcos writes:

El Sup had told me that if you want to know the Monster, you have to walk it. Walk through it, he told me, and you’ll see that the city is build on the people who can save it. So that’s what I did, I walked all around that city. And I went everywhere, and everywhere I went I ran into people like us Zapatistas, which means people who are screwed, which means people willing to fight, which means people who don’t give up.

To choose art to express these thoughts is more than propaganda or publicity seeking. It is a natural extension of revolutionary thought once military action has been dismissed as an option.

ARTIST DON'T CHANGE BLOODY LIGHTBULBS, THEY SIT IN THE DARK AND MOPE [OR ARTISTS TAKE THE LEAD]



If someone does something that inspires another person to do or think something differently could that person be regarded as a leader? Could it be an act of leadership? Of course it could, even if only relying on the definition of leadership provided by a Collins desk dictionary: "to rule, guide or inspire". How about if the person who has done the 'something' wasn't seeking to influence or inspire but it happened anyway? Is it still leadership? I would say yes. In fact I would go as far as to say that this is sometimes the best sort of leadership you can find; influenced less by ego or individual gain than a good deal of assertive or professional leadership.

So, leadership sometimes occurs when art is made. Not always, because that would be a bag of identical marbles, and would inevitably lead to another box on an application form for public subsidy: 'In what way is your work exhibiting leadership and who will be the beneficiary'. But there is a fair amount of art out there that does inspire, influence and, even guide its recipients, and we should not be scared of accepting the leadership provided by the art and during the act of its creation. It may be an artist has been personally motivated to work in the natural environment and that the consequent art has stirred an appreciation of the complexity of nature and motivated protection of the environment. Or a composer has instinctively incorporated elements of folk music into a contemporary composition that has provoked a challenge to the value of tradition. Or a poet has made someone laugh when describing a sexual act and made that person realise something about her or his inhibitions. One way or another this art exhibits a form of leadership that in other walks of life would be celebrated and it is happening when the artist is doing what he or she does best – not necessarily by design.

Some artists include the objective of social change in their practice. The London-based collective Platform believes in "the transformatory power of art" for the pursuit of "social and ecological justice". The core team of artists work with artist and campaigning collaborators (and I've been one of them in the past) to "promote alternative futures". Platform is happy to accept the campaigning objective as much as the artistic objective as criteria for the evaluation of its work. By setting the agenda and initiating patterns of work for their extended network, Platform, I would suggest, have established themselves as leaders. The success of their work gives me no doubt about their skill as leaders for a wide international community. Artists placing themselves in this position may also adopt other forms of leadership, through organisational or charismatic skills. This might be crucial to their work but is a tangent to the leadership through artistic practice being discussed here.

Over the last three years I have been writing and producing a drama production that includes the treatment of artists by the German Third Reich. This is a horrific but useful set of circumstances to consider when examining the idea of artistic leadership. The Nazis persecuted many artists, labelling them as 'degenerate'. The ethnic or religious origin of the artist was sometimes sufficient reason for their persecution in the very earliest stages of what was to become The Holocaust. Other, 'ethnically clean', artists were persecuted solely because of their art; because of the 'modern' nature of their work. Hitler regarded artists as a real and tangible threat but instead of just making them and their art disappear, and he would have had the ability to simply erase both, he attempted to devalue them. In an attempt to show his strength over the art he organised a series of exhibitions of 'degenerate' art that instead of undermining confirmed its power. He knew that the art was not just symbolic of change; it was instigating and causing change.

The pursuit of artistic practice or a fresh platform for work can result in artists substantially impacting on a community. When Sir Peter Maxwell Davis established the St Magnus Festival in Orkney he also created enormous benefit to the

community, economically and culturally. Every year thousands of people travel many hundreds of miles to a small Scottish island with an expectation of a great musical experience that will include the new and challenging. Those visitors, and many others who don't even make the journey, now have a real association between the rich culture of Orkney and contemporary performance. I don't know whether Maxwell Davis set out to cause any other benefit to his community when he started the festival but it is clear that it was his love of music that was his primary motivation.

Some artists become good managers or promoters of art, including through education, by acquiring other skills and experience. In its best examples this is an extension of, and intimately informed by, the practice of the artist. These managers, promoters or educators could also benefit from a greater understanding of artistic leadership. For example, by identifying the abilities derived from their practice they may have a stronger argument to their employer for keeping their artistic practice alive.

There is work to be done on understanding leadership through artistic practice. Artists and the recipients of their work can benefit from that understanding. This is particularly true for those artists whose work is done in the public environment, involves social engagement in the creative process or who are in collaboration with the business or government sectors. The potential benefit to artists is informed confidence of what their practice can achieve and what recipients or collaborators can expect from them. The benefit to other sectors is an enhanced understanding of the value of the artist, for example an informed respect for the artist as leader should protect the process and working needs of the artist. Insight into the quality and nature of artistic leadership could also help communication between collaborators, as expectations are refined. Whether they achieve it by accident or design artists can benefit by understanding the leadership their practice can provide.

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For more information:

Platform www.platformlondon.org

St Magnus Festival www.stmagnusfestival.com

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