

Live Art Development Agency Young People's Resource Pack

What is in this resource pack?

This resource is intended to give teachers and students background information on Live Art practices and practitioners. It provides stimulus and talking points for accessible debate about Live Art and its relationship with wider contemporary art and performance cultures. The Young People's Resource Pack contains:

- Introductory texts about Live Art
- A web-based journey, leading students through a series of video clips providing an introduction to Live Art
- Biographies and online resource guides to 5 key Live Art practitioners
- Class Exercises focussing on the work of these artists
- Further resources and suggestions for continuing explorations in Live Art.

Who is covered within this resource?



There are 5 artists whose work is featured in depth – Yara El-Sherbini, Blast Theory, Richard DeDomenici, Curious and Oreet Ashery. The following artists are also mentioned peripherally; Joshua Sofaer, Priya Mistry, Kensquallp, Gob Squad, Frenchmottershead, Aaron Williamson, Staci Makishi and Stewart Home.

Why should my students experience Live Art?

The National Curriculum, although not explicitly mentioning Live Art, does make reference to the use of installations, digital media, and the potential for Art to encompass more than traditional, static media. Teaching young people about Live Art can encourage them to experience differing artistic practices, intentions and techniques. Because it is both accessible and engaging, it is an excellent way to encourage your students to think about more abstract questions about what kind of art they create and appreciate. Young people may also identify with the risk-taking, participatory or socially engaged practice of the Live Artists featured within this pack, who have been chosen because of their accessibility to a young audience.

When is the best time to teach my students about Live Art?

This resource pack is aimed at secondary school students, in particular Key Stage 3/4. Younger pupils may also enjoy some of the clips and activities within this pack. Older students may wish to engage with the resources on the Live Art Development Agency's website. A-level students (or equivalent) may also be interested in visiting the agency's study room. Full details are available at www.thisisliveart.co.uk

How should I use this resource?

This resource pack has been written to allow for individual case studies to be taught in isolation, or to be taught as a whole. Each artist's work is accompanied by an activity to stimulate discussion and some suggested talking points. All the clips featured within this pack are suitable for viewing by children and young people, but it is recommended that teachers watch the clips beforehand to ensure that they are comfortable with what is contained within them.

Where can I find out more information?

At the end of this resource you will find suggestions for further reading and research. Teachers are welcome to contact the Live Art Development Agency to make use of the extensive resources contained within its study room. The agency also runs Unbound – an online shop which specialises in publications and artefacts related to groundbreaking and risk-taking contemporary art practices. Unbound offers a 20% discount on orders for primary and secondary schools. www.thisisunbound.co.uk

Introducing Live Art

- *What is Live Art?* from the Live Art Development Agency website
- Text from Joshua Sofaer's performance *What is Live Art?*
- Online Journey: Introducing Live Art (approx 20min)
- Talking Points for Discussion

What is Live Art? Live Art Development Agency website

"Live Art is a framing device for a catalogue of approaches to the possibilities of liveness by artists who chose to work across, in between, and at the edges of more traditional artistic forms.

To talk about Live Art is to talk about art that invests in ideas of process, presence and experience as much as the production of objects or things; art that wants to test the limits of the possible and the permissible; and art that seeks to be alert and responsive to its contexts, sites and audiences.

Live Art offers a space in which artists can take formal and conceptual risks, create a context to look at different mediums of expression, explore ideas of process, presence and endurance, and investigate relationships with an audience.

For many artists Live Art is a generative force: to destroy pretence, to create sensory immersion, to shock, to break apart traditions of representation, to open different kinds of engagement with meaning.

Disrupting borders, breaking rules, defying traditions, resisting definitions, asking awkward questions and activating audiences, Live Art breaks the rules about who is making art, how they are making it and who they are making it for."

The full text is available at www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/what_is_live_art.html

What is Live Art? by Joshua Sofaer (extract)

"What is Live Art? Well, at its most fundamental, Live Art is when an artist chooses to make work directly in front of the audience in space and time. So instead of making an object, or an environment (a painting for example) and leaving it for the audience to encounter in their own time, Live Art comes into being at the actual moment of encounter between artist and spectator. Or at least even if they are not physically present, the artist sets up a situation in which the audience experience the work in a particular space and time, and the notion of 'presence' is key to the concerns of the work.

Live Art offers a haven to artists whose work does not comply with the strictures of traditional designations and gives those practices legitimacy within contemporary culture.

Many artists have left the galleries and the theatres and seek more public and specific sites to make their work. The city itself has become a gallery. For some, this has been a reaction to the commercial art-market, where objects become discrete commodities which are bought as investments, accrue value, and are sold on.

They choose to reject this commodity fetishism by creating work which vanishes once it has been made, that deals with the here and now, and that can rarely be hung on a gallery wall.

But at least part of the definition of Live Art has to be its resistance to definition. Maybe it's called 'live' precisely because it hasn't yet solidified into a category; it is a live process of change and challenge. In a cultural climate of 'Plain English' and 'Transparency' this slippage, perhaps above all else, makes it a provocative place to be making work at the beginning of the twenty-first century".

Joshua Sofaer (b. 1972 Cambridge, England) is an artist who is centrally concerned with modes of collaboration and participation. He acts as curator, producer or director of a broad range of projects, including large-scale events, intimate performances, and publications.

"What is Live Art?" can be purchased as a DVD on Unbound, or viewed in the study room at the Live Art Development Agency. The full text and information about Joshua Sofaer's work is available on his website:



www.joshuasofaer.com/index

Online Journey: Introducing Live Art (approx 20min)

Audience reactions to Live Art:

- *DoorWonderLand* by Priya Mistry (3min 18sec)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yh7YN7ZjKMI

Three examples of Live Art:

- *Pedestrian Congestion Charge* by Richard Dedomenici (1min 59sec)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeRDRmEQMPk
- *So, err...* by Blast Theory (1min 48sec)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xe6p28x4nU
- *Foot dance with books, brackets and the potato* by Kensquallp (4min 32sec)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOUIW4JT6ZE

Artists exploring why they make their work:

- *Why we make performance* by Gob Squad Arts (2min 10sec)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=47slfeqqUHS
- *FrenchMottershead talking* by FrenchMottershead (1min 29sec)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZHzMd8pGP4
- *Performance is* by Aaron Williamson (1min 1sec)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxdG_gzNv7E
- *Power of Art part 2* by Richard Dedomenici (2min 28sec)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUro1thAPg&NR=1
- *How and why I make art in 60 seconds* by Staci Makishi (1min 25sec)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9Ms1XDocvI

Talking Points: Introducing Live Art

What is Live Art?

Why do these artists make Live Art?

How do these Live Artists involve the public in their work?

What do you think it would be like to be an audience member experiencing a Live Art performance by one of these artists?

Case Study:

Curious

Helen Paris and Leslie Hill have been working together as Curious for the past twelve years. Intimacy and a shared sense of encounter with an audience is always an important element in their work. Helen and Leslie called their company Curious because what drives them as artists is an intense curiosity about the world in which they live. Each of the projects starts with a question; What is the relationship between smell and memory? What do you long for and where do you belong? What are gut feelings?



The subsequent investigations involve intimate, personal journeys alongside public research and enquiry. This leads the artists into collaborations and conversations with an array of people including truck-stop waitresses, biological scientists, political refugees, nuclear weapons experts, film-makers, old folk and lost property workers. They also encourage a dialogue with audiences and participants who are eager to share thoughts and experiences with them through interactive performance, installation and film-making. The resulting work is sometimes intimate, frequently edgy, often humorous and always authentic.

Online Resources: Curious

- **Things to Read**

General overview of Curious' work

www.britishcouncil.org/arts-performanceinprofile-2009-british_council-curious

Artsadmin profile of Curious

www.artsadmin.co.uk/projects/artist.php?id=42

- **Things to Watch**

Curious' YouTube Channel

www.youtube.com/user/curiousltd

- **Things to Explore**

Curious' Website

www.placelessness.com/

Curious' Facebook page

www.facebook.com/pages/Curious/117102757893

Class Exercise: On the Scent

1. Read Curious' description about *On the Scent*:

"Have you ever been taken unawares by something in the air - transported to another place and time by an intangible but achingly familiar scent? *On the Scent* explores the elusive connections between smell and memory. The performance takes place in a domestic setting through which four audience members at a time are invited on intimate and aromatic journeys. Scents mingle and intertwine in the living-room, kitchen and bedroom as three distinctly different performers exude haunting, darkly humorous and seductive essences throughout the house."

2. Watch these clips of *On the Scent*:

www.placelessness.com/project/1121/on-the-scent/

www.youtube.com/user/LiveArtOnline#p/c/54A4F6A9594357BF/9/WK0i_K6LK0U

3. Think about the following smells –

lemon
perfume
dog poo
vanilla
burning

ginger
air freshener
roses
wet jumper
feet

cut grass
alcohol
blood
laundry
coffee

paper
armpits
apple
suncream
bread

Do any of them make you think of stories or events from your life? As part of their *On the Scent* project, Curious collected over 2,000 smell memories from audience members, recorded in 14 different countries.

Talking Points: On the Scent

Can you think of any other types of art or performance which use smells and scents as a tool?

How might using the audience's sense of smell help to communicate an experience or memory to them?

On the Scent used smell to stimulate the audience's imagination. How could you use other senses to do this?

According to the Live Art Development Agency website, "Live Art asks us what it means to be here, now." Do you think that experiencing a performance which involved all of your senses would hold your attention more than a traditional play or art exhibition?

Case Study: Blast Theory

Blast Theory is renowned internationally as one of the most adventurous artists' groups using interactive media, creating groundbreaking new forms of performance and interactive art that mixes audiences across the internet, live performance and digital broadcasting. The group's work explores interactivity and the social and political aspects of technology. It confronts a media saturated world in which popular culture rules, using performance, installation, video, mobile and online technologies to ask questions about the ideologies present in the information that envelops us.



Some examples of the groups work include *I Like Frank* (2004), the world's first mixed reality game for 3G phones. *Day Of The Figurines* (2006) is an SMS game for up to 1000 players set in a decaying English town occupied by an Arabic army. Blast Theory has two permanent installations, one in the Energy Gallery at the Science Museum and *Flypad* (2008), an 11 player augmented reality game, for The Public Gallery in West Bromwich.

Online Resources: Blast Theory

- **Things to Read**

Overview of Blast Theory's work

www.britishcouncil.org/arts-performanceinprofile-2009-british_council-blast_theory

Article about Blast Theory in the New York Times

www.nytimes.com/2009/11/12/technology/personaltech/12basics.html?_r=3&scp=1&sq=blast%20theory&st=cse

- **Things to Watch**

Blast Theory's YouTube Channel

www.youtube.com/user/blasttheory

Blast Theory's Vimeo Channel

www.vimeo.com/blasttheory

- **Things to Explore**

Blast Theory's Website

www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/index.php

Blast Theory's Facebook - www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6320997815

Class Exercise: You Get Me

1. Watch this YouTube clip of Blast Theory's interactive game *You Get Me*:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4THE0Dk5Kw

2. Read this description of the project from Blast Theory's Website:

"You Get Me is a documentary game played between Mile End Park and the Covent Garden in London. It is a work about understanding, mediation and place. It uses the internet to connect two sites that although they are only five miles apart geographically are separated by a much larger cultural gulf. *You Get Me* uses a game structure and then stretches it and extends it. It is an exploration of whether a game can be a conversation and whether technology bridges or reinforces social divides.

Eight young people were chosen to work on the project. Blast Theory worked with them to create personal geographies. Each of the eight explored important places or events in their life and formed them into a map; some were tight logical areas (Rita's was arranged around the swimming pool in which she had nearly drowned) while others were more freeform (Hussain linked his home with key places in Bangladesh). From these maps a critical question about their lives were brought to the surface. These questions came to be the animating force of the work.

Visitors to the Opera House play on the internet. Visitors choose from one of the teenagers (known as runners) based on a picture of them and their question. Rachel asks "What is your line between flirting and cheating?", Jack wants to know, "Would you employ me?". You hear a story from that person (Jack describes jumping the barriers to Southend and pissing in a cup on the back of the rail replacement bus) and are dropped into the game.

By navigating your avatar through a virtual Mile End Park you can find your chosen runner while avoiding the others: if one of the others get too close you are knocked out of the game.

In this first stage your goal is to listen to the personal geography of your runner over the walkie talkie stream. As you learn more about them their question begins to deepen and make more sense. You then track them down and type them an answer to their question. If they don't like it, they throw you back: you need to listen to more of their personal geography and come up with a better answer.

If they feel that your answer is intriguing the runner invites you for a private chat. They switch to the privacy of a mobile phone and call you; in turn you can type them messages. A night time photo of the park slowly zooms to reveal the person you are talking to as a pixellated presence on a distant pathway.

This one to one exchange allows them to get your direct input into their life. They have framed the most important question in their life at that moment and they want your opinion. Hussain, for example, is wrestling with leaving home and asks you how you did it: does it get easier over time? Are all parents so obstructive and incomprehending?

Once you have finished your conversation they take a picture for you. The last thing you hear might be "This is Fern. It's 3.45 in the afternoon on Friday 12th September. I'm near the canal with the Pallant Estate behind me and I'm taking a photo for you. You get me." As you leave the Royal Opera House the photo arrives on your phone."

Talking Points: You Get Me

Why do you think Blast Theory make their art into games which the public can play?

If you had been a runner playing *You Get Me*, what do you think it would be like to challenge a member of the public to see if they could "get you"?

Do you think that *You Get Me* might attract a different type of audience into the Royal Opera House? Does that matter?

Is *You Get Me* a piece of Live Art? Why?

Please Note: The full, unedited text and more information regarding *You Get Me* and Blast Theory's work can be seen at www.blasttheory.co.uk

Case Study: Yara El-Sherbini

Yara El-Sherbini's practice straddles live art, video, and installation, using recognizable formats within contemporary popular culture to playfully explore art and life. She utilizes familiar and accessible frameworks, such as board games, game shows, pub quizzes and interventions as strategies to engage audiences to re-visit the construction of their belief systems, and question fields of knowledge. Her playful and humour driven work aims to facilitate debate and dialogue around politically contentious and socially driven ideas; as wide reaching as ethics to relational aesthetics, propaganda to climate change, culture and identity, to the role and function of the artist, at all times questioning what art is, can be and who it involves.



Online Resources: Yara El-Sherbini

- **Things to Read**

Overview of Yara El-Sherbini's work

www.britishcouncil.org/arts-performanceinprofile-2009-british_council-yara_el-sherbini.htm

Article about Yara El-Sherbini's comedy and diversity

www.realtimearts.net/feature/Inbetween_Time/8402

- **Things to Watch**

Clips of Yara El-Sherbini's work online

www.videoartworld.com/beta/artist_1855.html

An excerpt from Yara El-Sherbini's *Universality Challenged*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdnKocU8UDI

- **Things to Explore**

Yara El-Sherbini's Website

www.yaraelsherbini.com

Live Art Development Agency Website:

www.thisisliveart.co.uk

Class Exercise: Pub Quiz

1. Explore this webpage about Yara El-Sherbini's pub quiz project

www.bbc.co.uk/arts/powerofart/commissions/bristol.shtml

2. Write some satirical pub quiz questions of your own. Can you use comedy questions to make a point or joke about an issue that matters to you? Here is one of the questions the artist uses in her quiz:

"The actor Russell Crowe was reported as being the target of an Al-Qaida kidnap plot. Was this because...

- a. They wanted to destroy the western empire by removing the actor?
- b. They wanted to use his gladiator expertise in their training camps?
- c. They wanted a celebrity for their propaganda video clips?"

3. Read this review of *Pub Quiz*:

"Question: why is a pub quiz Art? Answer: Because the quiz mistress says it is, and the quiz mistress is always right. This is how sometime stand-up comedienne and Live Art artist Yara El-Sherbini holds fort in 'Pub Quiz' at Toynbee Studios' Arts Bar and Café. And true to both El-Sherbini's comedic roots and her Live Art practise the questions and answers in Pub Quiz are variously open to interpretation, politically astute and extremely funny both in, and because of, their deviousness.

For example Round 6 Question 2 "Jean Charles de Menezes was shot and killed when mistaken for a 'suicide bomber'. On news reports shocked passengers on the tube carriage stated the Brazilian man was 'Asian, definitely Asian'. Does this suggest that A. All brown people look the same B. There are people in the world who believe Brazil is part of Asia". Round 6 Question 5. "As a team, how many times in the past 2 years, have you refrained from criticizing an artwork because you were afraid that you were being culturally insensitive? A. Once, B. More than Once, C. Never"

It follows that any points given for answering such ultimately unknowable questions are awarded according to the internal logic of the quiz mistress. Due to El-Sherbini's (un) wise judgement our team somewhat unfairly missed out on pole position, but we did win a prize for the best team name 'I'm Just Going for a Wee...'

But despite all the fun, Pub Quiz is deceptive. Underneath its jollity lies the serious strategy of much socially engaged art practice: that of locating the subject of the work at the very site of its political or conceptual operation. Art as social engagement mimes the form, content and structure of that which it inhabits in order to trouble the presumptions and function of that system; in doing so it activates the concerns of the art work 'from within'. El-Sherbini, in taking her art about positive action BME policies, racial politics and identity in today's multicultural Britain to a pub, infiltrates the very nucleus of British culture that has traditionally harboured heterosexual

white working class resistance to the actual subject of her work. In short, El-Sherbini's seemingly innocuous Pub Quiz culturally masks the artist's true satirical and political intent, thus giving the work a potent criticality that is best located in the unsuspecting pub regular.

However, this potency is somewhat lost in Toynbee Studios Arts Bar and Café. The venue is not a pub and El-Sherbini's liberal audience are all too aware of the tongue-in-cheek artistic aping of the pub quiz format. We are already primed to have our assumptions about British Pakistanis and Indians – not to be confused with Muslims - unpicked. More importantly, no-body here would want to question the quiz mistress, her art or her politics. As such, the Art Bar and Café context acts as a critical muffler for Pub Quiz, transforming what would have been a true critical encounter in a pub into something more like a sideshow to the real event. This is not to take away from the work's impact in other national venues. My hope is that Pub Quiz will forever be linked to the anecdote of the perplexed pub quiz enthusiasts in Bristol who complained about the quiz mistresses' supremely subjective reign over the answers and were duly offered a full refund. Whether or not the disappointed quizzers took the refund isn't clear but it proves that, when staged right, the particular clashing of cultures in Pub Quiz can be an enjoyable, but moreover challenging, experience".

Rachel Clapham

www.liveartuk.org/writingfromliveart/index89f8.html

Talking Points: Pub Quiz

What do you think the artist is hoping to do with her satirical pub quiz?

Can something be art just because the artist says it is?

The reviewer experienced the work in the bar of a theatre, and comments that it would be very different in a traditional pub, run as a genuine pub quiz. What do you think would happen if the players didn't know they were part of a Live Art project?

Yara El-Sherbini makes art which comments on her heritage and culture. Do you think a pub quiz is a good way to get people to think about this?

Case Study: Oreet Ashery

Oreet Ashery is a London based artist. Her work tends to take the form of the site-specific event/installation with audience interaction. Gallery based work includes installation, digital prints, objects and videos. The work is shown internationally in museums, galleries, art spaces, domestic and site specific locations, time-based festivals, cinemas, publications and the internet. Ashery also works as a lecturer and an educationalist in various contexts.

Some of her previous work has included a participatory project with women seeking asylum in the UK due to their sexual orientation, and work dressed as a male character, including; an orthodox Jewish man, an Arab man, a black man, a Norwegian postman, a large farmer and most recently a false messiah. Her most recent work was a video installation with ex-prisoners at the Royal Opera House, London.



Online Resources: Oreet Ashery

- **Things to Read**

Overview of Oreet Ashery's work

www.re-title.com/artists/Oreet-Ashery.asp

Oreet Ashery's CV and biography

www.thecentreofattention.org/exhibitions/oreet.html

- **Things to Watch**

An excerpt from Ashery's artwork *Colored Folks*

<http://oreetashery.net/video/collaborationscolorfolks>

An excerpt from Ashery's work *What is it Like for You*

<http://oreetashery.net/video/whatisitlikeforyou>

- **Things to Explore**

Oreet Ashery's Website

<http://oreetashery.net/>

Oreet Ashery's facebook page

www.facebook.com/people/Oreet-Ashery/637415212

Oreet Ashery's myspace

www.myspace.com/133337759

Class Exercise: Haircuts

1. Watch the clip of *Central Location* by Oreet Ashery on the artist's website:

<http://oreetashery.net/projects/centrallocation>

2. Read this text about the project:

"Central Location is an interactive project offering free hair cutting and shaving to the public. The project is context-responsive and as such reference different social and cultural aspects of hair cutting or shaving, in particular forced ones.

In Berlin Ashery offered hair shaving to the public as different characters; an orthodox Jew, a rabbit, as herself and as a black woman. Each character changes the context of the interaction. In Berlin the intentions were to reflect on the historical narratives related to the hair shaving in the concentration camps during WWII and also to reflect on the complexity of the notion of the contemporary Skinhead in Berlin.

In the window galley in Charing Cross Road in London, *Central location* was challenging the divide between the art school building and the street outside by inviting people from the street who would phone Ashery's mobile to come into the building and have a hair cut whilst other people from the street can watch, those from the art college came out to watch too."

3. Read about another project involving unusual haircuts:

www.mammalian.ca/template.php?content=social_haircutsUK

4. Finally, watch this video made by the artist Stewart Home:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=R56-r--VjLE

Talking Points: Haircuts

Why did Oreet Ashery choose Berlin to perform *Central Location*? How did it change the performance to be in a different location, or if Oreet Ashery played a different character when she was shaving the participant's head?

Would you be brave enough to let a 9 year old cut your hair?

Haircutting or head-shaving is used by some Live Artists as a tool to express themselves or their ideas. Other artists have even had plastic surgery as part of their art, or used their own blood to make paintings. Do you think it is ok for people to change or use their bodies to make a point?

Can you think of other ways in which people turn their bodies into artwork?

Case Study: Richard DeDomenici

Richard DeDomenici has described his work as "anarcho-surrealist" and himself as a "one-man-subversive-think-tank". His previous work has included an endeavour to turn coal into diamonds; seeking to train the guns of HMS Belfast onto his mother's house in Watford; and trying to design an interface to enable cows to access the internet.

In 2009, during his residency at the Akademie der Künste Berlin, Richard DeDomenici led a goose around the perimeter of the new US embassy to test his hypothesis that geese can detect radiation. In June he opened a temporary café which sells only airplane food. His future plans include a Eurovision Marathon, in which he will watch every Eurovision Song Contest back-to-back without sleep, which he estimates will take approximately one week.



Online Resources: Richard DeDomenici

- **Things to Read**

General overview of DeDomenici's biography and work

www.britishcouncil.org/arts-performanceinprofile-2008-richard-dedomenici

Interview exploring past work and Dedomenici's motivations for his practice

www.liveartuk.org/writingfromliveart/indexd3f3.html

Newspaper article about DeDominci's Plane Food Café project (2009)

www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/jun/07/richard-dedomenici-in-flight-food

- **Things to Watch**

DeDomenici's YouTube channel, with videos of his previous projects

www.youtube.com/user/DeDomenici

Project V: An online short film project including DeDomenici

www.project-v.net/blog/richarddedomenici

- **Things to Explore**

DeDomenici's website

www.dedomenici.co.uk/

DeDomenici's blog

<http://dedomenici.blogspot.com/>

Class Exercise: Fame Asylum

1. Explore this Channel4 website about Richard DeDomenici's *Fame Asylum* project, and watch the boyband he created performing their single:

www.channel4learning.com/support/programmenotes/micro/fameasylum

2. Read this email from a viewer of the programme:

From: LUNA RAHMAN
Sent: 16 February 2007 12:52

Dear Richard,
I have just watched your programme 'Fame Asylum'. You said that you think you haven't been benevolent - you have been worse than that. You may have given the boys a small amount of self-esteem but that was never your intention. This was an art project to you; you took a group of vulnerable men and used them for your benefit - your choreographer was correct in saying that you have been callous. Your programme has left me angry that you entered into this project without sufficient thought or research into the legacy or long lasting effects that this could have on the young men involved. You are dealing with people's lives not a group of inanimate objects in an academic experiment. When this is all over who will they turn to?

Yours
Luna Rahman

3. Read this extract from Richard DeDomenici's reply to Luna Rahman:

To: LUNA RAHMAN
Date: Fri, 16 Feb 2007 15:24

Dear Luna,
Thanks for your email. It was explained to the young men before they auditioned that the most we could offer them were two weeks of interesting experiences. When Aaron, David, Long, and Saeed all met for the first time I rammed home the point that the music industry is extremely fickle, boybands doubly so. I made it clear that no boyband has ever been formed in a fortnight before, and that, as such, there was little to no chance the band would get a deal, and that they should consider just getting to the final gig as their overall objective. Understandably, the director left all this stuff out of the documentary for dramatic effect.

The project finished last summer, and since then the boys have returned to their normal lives, which was a bit weird for everyone, especially Saeed, who had only been in the UK for a few weeks prior to auditioning, and had thus learned most of his English from artists, tv people and musos. All are currently studying and hoping to stay in the country, although, having reached eighteen, everyone except Aaron currently has their cases under review by the Home Office. The chances of them all remaining in the UK is

very low, although their legal teams have asked me to provide them with full details of the Fame Asylum project, as it is thought that participation in such an enterprise may help further their cases.

I don't want to brush away your points, which are entirely valid. The project was always going to be ethically dubious - which is a running theme of my work, which is fine when it's just me in the firing line (as is normally the case), but far more problematic when it's four 'vulnerable' men. (Although some would argue that, having gone through so much pain and suffering in their lives just to get the UK, being in a boyband for a fortnight is water off a duck's back). I remain in contact with Aaron, David, Long and Saeed, who also remain in contact with each other, the production team, and members of the crew. This support structure would not have been in place had the project not happened.

I am very glad that C4 got involved, even though I lost some creative control, as they paid for the recording studio and the choreographer, vocal coach and songwriter, and above all documented the project professionally and guaranteed it an audience. But the intention of the project was never to get my face on the telly (I don't contact TV companies with ideas. Sometimes, as on this occasion, it's the other way around. I'm fine with this, as I feel that television may be an ideal medium for my work. Most requests are turned down, however. I am well aware of the populist media's attitude to contemporary art, and that all publicity is not necessarily good publicity).

From its inception the project was designed to polarise the press, but I was still a little surprised by their voracity: "*Richard DeDomenici is an Idiot*" PopJustice, "*The Worst Idea For A Television Programme In The World Ever*" The Guardian, "*Appalling*" The British National Front). Most emails so far have been quite positive, some people saying that the programme made them cry, others that it has softened their attitude to immigration. Fame Asylum has been by far my most ambitious and problematic project to date. It's still far too early for me to decide whether it was a good idea or not.

Regards,
Richard DeDomenici

Talking Points: Fame Asylum

Why does Luna Rahman think DeDomenici has been "callous"?

Why might DeDomenici want to make Live Art which is controversial?

Should a Live Artist feel bad if they upset people?

DeDomenici says it is too early for him to "decide whether it was a good idea or not". Do you think the project was a good idea or not?

Please Note: The full, unedited emails and more information regarding Fame Asylum and DeDomenici's work can be seen at www.dedomenici.co.uk.

Where Next: Further Research

Live Art Development Agency

Teachers and older students are welcome to contact the Live Art Development Agency to make use of the extensive resources contained within its study room. In particular, the study room guide by Frenchmottershead may be of interest. www.thisisliveart.co.uk

Unbound

The Live Art Development Agency also runs Unbound – an online shop which specialises in publications and artefacts related to groundbreaking and risk-taking contemporary art practices. Unbound offers a 20% discount on orders for primary and secondary schools. www.thisisunbound.co.uk

Everything You Wanted to Know About Live Art But Were Afraid to Ask

Live Artists were invited to make short films saying something that they think younger artists should know about Live Art. This excellent and accessible DVD provides a starting point for further reflection.

http://thisisunbound.co.uk/index.php?main_page=product_book_info&products_id=257

The Live Art Collection

The Live Art Collection archive was initiated in late 2008 and is maintained by the British Library in collaboration with the Live Art Development Agency. www.webarchive.org.uk/ukwa/collection/26312782/page/1

Websites of Live Artists

A list of the websites of Live Artists with whom Live Art Development Agency has worked. www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/weblinks.html

Live Art UK

Live Art UK brings together key promoters and facilitators to support and develop the Live Art infrastructure for the benefit of artists and audiences. Their website contains critical writing and information resources about Live Art. www.liveartuk.org/

Artsadmin

Artsadmin's website carries a comprehensive and regularly updated list of providers of advice and information, and artists' development opportunities in its Links and Resources section. www.artsadmin.co.uk/home/

New Work Network

NWN supports the development of new performance, live and interdisciplinary arts practices. Their website has information about upcoming Live Art events and opportunities. www.newworknetwork.org.uk/index.php

Where Next: Live Art in Practice

Creative Partnerships

Creative Partnerships fosters long-term partnerships between schools and creative professionals, including Live Artists. Creative professionals work as Creative Agents, helping to deliver the programme, or as creative practitioners working directly with students and teachers. www.creative-partnerships.com/

Artsadmin Youth Board

As well as steering projects for young people at Artsadmin, the Youth Board aims to create opportunities for young people to show and develop their work in a supportive environment, and also consulting with young artists on what they would like to see happening for young people in the arts.

www.artsadmin.co.uk/education/youth-board.php?id=38

The Performance Pack

Joshua Sofaer's pre-packed performance lecture kit containing everything you need to make The Performance Pack Performance including script, audio-visual material, props and suggestions for staging. It is also a limited edition artwork, and can be rented from the Live Art Development Agency. www.joshuasofaer.com/texts/educate_ei.html

Perform Everyday

This artist's book seeks to establish a relationship between everyday actions and performance. It encourages us to go about our daily routine, as if it were a work of art. It contains images, stimuli and narratives to inspire Live Art. www.joshuasofaer.com/texts/write_ped.html

How to be an Artist

Michael Atavar's book *How to be an Artist* contains provocations and springboards designed to be a starting point in generating artwork. www.how-to-be-an-artist.com/

A Mis-Guide to Anywhere

A Mis-Guide to Anywhere is like no other guide you have used before. Rather than telling you where to go and what to see, it provides provocations for reader-walkers to make their own exploratory journeys anywhere they choose. http://thisisunbound.co.uk/index.php?main_page=product_book_info&cPath=7&products_id=154

The Young People's Resource Pack was produced by Clare Shucksmith on behalf of the Live Art Development Agency. Clare founded 2headedpigeon Theatre Company in 2003. Her interest lies in experimental theatre and live art, and she has premiered 6 productions on the London/Edinburgh Fringe. The Inconsiderate Aberrations of Billy the Kid (2009) won the ThreeWeeks Editor's Award. Clare has produced numerous shows for youth theatre groups, including Spaceworks and East 15 Acting School. She has written resources and scripts for young people for both commercial and not-for-profit youth organisations. She is currently studying for a Masters in Creative Producing at Birkbeck College, University of London.