

# Making it Your Own?

A Study Room Guide on social engagement & participation



Compiled & written by French & Mottershead  
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Live Art  
Development  
Agency

## LADA Study Room Guides

As part of the continuous development of the Study Room we regularly commission artists and thinkers to write personal Study Room Guides on specific themes.

The idea is to help navigate Study Room users through the resource, enable them to experience the materials in a new way and highlight materials that they may not have otherwise come across.

All Study Room Guides are available to view in our Study Room, or can be viewed and/or downloaded directly from their Study Room catalogue entry.

Please note that materials in the Study Room are continually being acquired and updated. For details of related titles acquired since the publication of this Guide search the online Study Room catalogue with relevant keywords and use the advance search function to further search by category and date.

FrenchMottershead

## **Making It Your Own? – Social Engagement and Participation**

For this Study Room Guide, we'd like to direct you to some key artworks and texts in this Study Room (and beyond), in which the artist's intention is to engage the audience in the work.

What we offer is not meant as a definitive list. We are especially keen on socially-engaged works, in which the frame proposed by the artist is open, and allows participants to make their involvement their own, taking it to a point that the artist could not have reached alone.

In keeping with this idea of an open framework, we've approached the writing of this guide each in our own way.

On the first three pages, Andrew comments on some key documents relating to participatory models, then on subsequent pages Rebecca points to different levels of engagement/participation through a selection of works she finds interesting or has participated in.

Rebecca French & Andrew Mottershead  
August 2009

Stephen Willats

**Intervention and Audience**, 1986

P1283

The urge to engage the audience in the creative process is not without precedent. Since the 1960s, Stephen Willats has conceptualised, carried out, and argued for, the making of artworks that closed the separation between artist and audience. Published in 1986, his collection of writings "Intervention and Audience" is his polemic against the dominance of the art object and its idealisation in society. Instead, he argues for artists and institutions to develop strategies and new forms where 'audience' are the rationale for the work. This discussion is still applicable now and can be a useful resource for artists of any ilk. There are texts on: A Social Model of Art Practice; Changes in the Social Climate; The Failure of Stylism; Lessons from Marginal Diversity; An Interventional Art; The Audience as the Rationale; Strategies and New Forms; Art as Social Process.

You'll notice there are no page numbers to order or direct the flow. This makes me use it like a toolbox of ideas, where you have to rummage around before you find the tool you want.

Also to view online:

'A State of Agreement'

UK, 2008, 34 minutes

Director: Charlotte Ginsborg

Producer: Stephanie Willats

<http://www.controlmagazine.org/stateofagreement.php>

**motiroti**

**Wigs of Wonderment**, 1995

ICA London, V0118 (1995)

Copenhagen, V0244 & V0245 (1997)

Interactive CD-rom, D0088

"Wigs of Wonderment", by **motiroti**, declares itself as an 'investigation of issues around race and gender, as manifest in hair and beauty'. "Wigs" is also an early example, if not the earliest in the study room, of a performance event which uses a 'one-to-one' participant-performer format.

There are three manifestations of the work represented here; there is video documentation from its first performance in 1995 at ICA, London (V0118), video from Copenhagen in 1997 (V0244, V0245) and a later interactive CD-rom (D0088).

A premise of a "one-to-one" is to create a direct dialogue between the participant and performer to generate meaning. With "Wigs", **motiroti** have constructed a situation that challenges the participants' self-image. In a 20-30 minute consultation, a stylist (performer) adorns a participant with wigs signifying different cultural stereotypes: afro, dread, blond etc., and talks to them as they admire (or critique) themselves in the mirror.

The unedited live videos from the inaugural ICA show, and the expanded, later version in Copenhagen, are rough but impressive. What strikes me about them is that they document the immersive environments **motiroti** created. The soundtrack, lighting, styling stations, array of products, the stylists' outfits and manner, are all carefully considered to help focus the attention on how the participant could feel about their image. But watching these videos you don't really get to hear what you want. You want to hear what's being said between the stylists and the participants. You wonder what they are wondering about wearing those wigs.

The CD-rom addresses this issue. It offers various rooms for your interpretation, including the Wigs Room, where you'll see and hear stylists and subjects interacting through the mirror.

Blast Theory  
**Kidnap**, 1998  
D0405

There's a growing collection of Blast Theory DVDs on the shelves of this Study Room. They represent a sequence of works made since 1994 that generally aim to place 'you' at the centre of the piece. In doing so, Blast Theory have sought new ways to make art and explored new modes of audience interaction.

Generally, the works use new media to animate your experience of a place or issue, or make you a part of an urban story. Generally, the works invite you to sign-up for a journey, one that is influenced by you and others connected to you via online or wireless technologies. Generally, I think what Blast Theory do is provide you with the infrastructure for the experience. In return, it's your responsibility as a participant to complete the art event.

Across the art world, artists are bound by an (unwritten) contract to deliver something for the audience; enlightenment, entertainment, experience, and so on. And the audience in turn have their responsibilities. (Even something as simple leaving a debit card in exchange for a handheld computer that was the catalyst for Blast Theory's "Uncle Roy All Around You" creates a binding, yet temporary agreement).

Unusually, at the core of "Kidnap", there's an explicit contract between Blast Theory and two people who have won the right to be abducted and held captive for 48 hours. What's interesting about this contract is that it poses questions about the power relationships between the kidnappers and the kidnapped. Do all parties fulfil their side of the bargain? Does the media event mean the work is more for the web viewers or press, than for those physically and psychologically involved in the work?

Also see:

Carsten Holler

**The Baudouin/Boudewijn Experiment**, 2000

A Deliberate, Non Fatalistic Large Scale Group Experiment in Deviation  
pps 144-145 in *Participation*, edited by Claire Bishop. P0937

**Works that require active participation by their art audience**  
*and in some cases artist and audience co-create the work*

Kira O'Reilly

**Untitled bomb shelter action for Kuopio, 2003**

can be seen on ANTI Contemporary Art Festival compilation DVD 2002-2006

D0741

Main DVD menu / Festival Programme 2002-2006 / 2003 / select a work / Kira O'Reilly  
Kira invites participants to make a single mark/cut on her skin with a scalpel. They can choose whether to do this or not. The performance ends with the audience members cradling Kira in a pieta, for video camera.

The pietas can also be seen on: **Untitled Action for Hong Kong, 2004** D0297

Joshua Sofaer

**Tate Scavengers, 2005**

D0301

A treasure hunt where teams of participants locate or create objects that fulfil the 100 clues/instructions. The following day all the objects are curated into an exhibition.

See also:

Yoko Ono

**Cut Piece, 1964**

pps 158-161 in "Yes", Yoko Ono, 2000  
P0528

Marina Abramovic

**Rhythm O, 1974**

Described briefly on p.165 of Rose Lee Goldberg's  
Performance Art from Futurism to the Present, 1988  
P0157

Janet Cardiff

**The Missing Voice, 1999**

Documentary publication of Audio Walk  
P0259

Interesting slippage between 'audio life' and 'real life'.  
Because of the framing of the work, passers-by become  
players in the piece (even more so in video walks she's  
made). Whitechapel Gallery have an audio walk you can  
take. Call 020 7522 7888 for details.

Plan B

**Bed Full of Songs, 2003 to present**

Located on 'Documentation' DVD within 'Durational Works'  
D0502  
This DVD footage from Berlin in 2003 doesn't really show it,  
but when I saw this piece at the Theatre Museum in 2006,  
people stayed for hours, suggesting their favourite songs,  
helping remember the words. At some points, everyone in  
the room was gustily singing a Wham hit ...

Reactor

**Ghaos, 2003-2005**

D0611

A pretty intense participation. Entering a totalitarian regime,  
working together to create a new utopia/dystopia.

Franco B

**Aktion 893 (Why Are You Here?), 2005**

Described in second to last paragraph of David Thorp's text  
at <http://www.franco-b.com/text4.htm>

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**Club Class, 2005-07**

D0593

Rachel Gomme

**Audience: A Collection of Silences, 2006**

D1193

Duckie

**The Class Club, 2006**

see under Past Events on [www.duckie.co.uk](http://www.duckie.co.uk)  
Choosing to be Lower, Middle or Upper class, participants  
then played out their choices at a Christmas party

Amy Sharrocks

**Swim, 2007**

[www.iwanttoswim.co.uk](http://www.iwanttoswim.co.uk)  
50 people swam across London, from Tooting Bec Lido to  
Hampstead Heath ponds, plunging into lakes, public and  
private swimming pools.

Yara El Sherbini

**Open Nights Pub Quiz, 2007**

D0747

Still images on this CD

Sheila Ghelani

**Covet me, Care for me, 2007**

D0802

SPILL – Festival of Performance  
Main DVD menu / Performances / Sheila Ghelani

## Works that collaborate with specific groups of people to create the work

Jeremy Deller

**The Battle of Orgreave**, 2001

DVD D0498

Also discussed in Off Limits – 40 Artangel Projects, 2002. Publication P0348

A re-enactment of the clash between picketing miners and riot police. Participants in the performance/film included the ex-miners who were present in 1984. Filmed by Mike Figgis.

See also:

Rineke Dijkstra

**The Buzzclub, Liverpool, UK/ Mysteryworld, Zaandam, NL** 1996-1997

Beautiful piece. Dancing for camera by young Liverpoolian and Dutch clubbers.

Search "Rineke Dijkstra" on Google Videos to view some terrible-quality pirate footage.

Anna Best

**PHIL**, 2002

on the Live Culture video V0624

30 people named 'phil' invited a London Philharmonic Orchestra musician into their home, for a private performance.

Matei Bejenaru

Various works in

**Situatii, Matei Bejenaru**

P1286

such as

**Strawberry Fields Forever**, 2002

pps 48-51

Making and selling strawberry jam, from fruit picked by Romanian casual workers in Spain.

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**Microperformance events**, 1999-2003

P0691

Participatory performance events that mixed an artworld audience with the members of SURDOC Working Men's Club, the Latvian Welfare Club, the West Indian Ex-Services Association and Throgmortons, a bar for city workers near London's Stock Exchange.

Jyll Bradley

**The Fragrant Project**, 2002-ongoing

P1284

In one of the first outings of Jyll's Fragrant project, we took part in a flower-arranging workshop, led by ladies from the National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies (NAFAS).

At the Church Ale Festival in 2005, we watched flower demonstrations, accompanied by the telling of personal stories from each arranger's life.

[www.homeliveart.com/past-projects/uncategorised/uncategorised/88-fragrant-flower-festival](http://www.homeliveart.com/past-projects/uncategorised/uncategorised/88-fragrant-flower-festival)

Karen Guthrie and Nina Pope

**Bata-ville – we are not afraid of the future**, 2005

D0089

Film of participatory art work which took former employees of the now-closed Bata shoe factories in East Tilbury and Maryport Cumbria to the Moravian town of Zlin in the Czech Republic, the home town of Bata shoes.

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**Five Shops**, 2005

Documentary postcard set

P0785

Customers and staff of independent local retailers participating in street intervention/performance for camera.

Tino Sehgal

**This success/This failure**, 2007

[www.ica.org.uk/Screaming+kids+13088.twl](http://www.ica.org.uk/Screaming+kids+13088.twl)

Schoolchildren performing/playing in the gallery.

Jeremy Deller

**Procession**, 2009

[www.manchesterprocession.com](http://www.manchesterprocession.com)

Large numbers of 'tribes' such as Rose Queens, Fleets of modified cars and EMOs proceeded down Manchester's Deansgate.

## Other works that collaborate with the general public (rather than specific groups as above)

Gillian Wearing

**Signs that say what you want to say and not signs that say what someone else wants you to say**, 1992-93

Much-copied series in which members of public are photographed holding up a piece of paper on which they've written their thoughts.

Search Tate's collection at [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

Ruth Ben-Tovim and Trish O'Shea

**Encounters – The Shop Collection**, 2002-04

P0818

Collecting and exhibiting urban histories of Sheffield residents.

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**The Post Echo**, 2006

P0922

Anthony Gormley

**One and Other**, 2009

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



**Objects that provoke a performance in the viewer**  
*or at least a more physical engagement than standing and looking*

Olafur Eliasson

**The Weather Project**, 2004

Tate Modern

<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/eliasson/about.htm>

<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/eliasson/understanding.htm>

P1288

Film: Stay Cool - Tate Modern, Turbine Hall - The Weather Project by Olafur Eliasson  
D1226

Film also available to watch on <http://www.z360.com/vj/3cool.htm>

This work drew people to 'perform' as picnic-eaters and sunbathers on the floor of the Turbine Hall, basking in the yellow light of a rising sun.

My favourite element was the ceiling mirrors, under which people swam along the floor of the gallery. In a bastardised form of backstroke for polished concrete, they used their legs to push along, while lifting their arms for the visual effect. Absorbed by their own reflections in the mirrored roof of the turbine hall over a hundred feet above, they swam lap after lap. Some had even perfected how to do a somersault turn at each end of the 'pool' and push off from the walls! Beautiful.

**See also:**

Marina Abramovic

**Transitory Objects for Human Use**, 1989 – Work in Progress  
pps 85-342 in *Public Body*, Marina Abramovic  
P0337

Cerith Wyn Evans

**Inverse Reverse Perverse**, 1996

<http://www.whitecube.com/exhibitions/inversereverse/>

In reference to Hall of Mirrors' distorting reflections, one can watch people 'perform' with the sculpture. Walking up, away, up again, away again, seeing how faces/bodies are distorted by the reflective surface.

Anish Kapoor

**Cloud Gate sculpture**, 2005

Millennium Park, Chicago, USA

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud\\_Gate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud_Gate)

Christian Boltanski's piles of second-hand clothing that could be taken away by visitors to the Take me (I'm Yours) show at the Serpentine Gallery in 1995. I then wore the clothes/artworks out in the streets.

Paola Pivi

**Untitled (Slope)**, 2003

[www.galerieperrotin.com/artiste-Paola\\_Pivi-10.html](http://www.galerieperrotin.com/artiste-Paola_Pivi-10.html)

then click on the pic of green grass

Carsten Holler

**Test Site**, 2006

[www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/carstenholler](http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/carstenholler)

## Written instructions that provoke a performance in the viewer

Brian Eno / Peter Schmidt

**Oblique Strategies**, 1975

Over one hundred worthwhile dilemmas

P1287

These cards are meant to be used. When a work dilemma presents itself, draw one from the pack and follow the instruction.

### See also:

Yoko Ono

**Grapefruit**, 1964, 1970

P1289

A Book of Instructions and Drawings. The instructions are largely fantastical and can't be done, but I'm mentioning it because one participates beautifully in the mind!

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**The People Series**, 2003-08

P0578

Documentation boxsets of various manifestations of this work, which was created to layer on top of the existing social milieu of gallery private views and art festivals.

Matei Bejenaru

**Travel Guide**, 2005-07

P1285

See also pps 80-103 of **Situatii**, Matei Bejenaru

P1286

A guide (pre-Romania's accession to the EU) showing Romanian migrant workers how to travel across Europe and enter the UK.

Wrights and Sites

**An Exeter Mis-Guide**, 2003

P0560

An unassuming site-specific book that contains a wealth of ideas. Instructions to start participants off on new journeys and new directions, within the city of Exeter.

See also "A Mis-Guide to Anywhere", 2006, P1016

**Do It**, 2004. Edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist

P0645

A collection of 168 written instructions by international artists.

## **'Forced' participation**

*These works require the involvement of others and don't ask them first.*

Luke Jerram

**Sky Orchestra**, 2003-2007

See 'Art in Mind, An artist's journey exploring the edges of perception' by Luke Jerram  
Chapter Two. Sky Orchestra: Sounds Delivered to the Edge of Sleep pps 32-61  
P1177

Early in the morning, Luke Jerram launches several hot air balloons over a city, rigged with speakers that play specially-composed music to sleepers and early risers.

There are two levels of participation that I find interesting with this work.

The first is that people are unknowing participants, as their dreams (may be) influenced by the music. And therefore, although provoked by the artist, they make the artwork absolutely their own as their dreamscapes play out inside their heads.

The other level of participation is people waking and peering out from behind their bedroom curtains. Then catching sight of a balloon and running out into back gardens to get a better look. So the view of the world from the balloons, is of back gardens and streets, dotted with people in pyjamas and dressing gowns!

See also:

Graciela Carnevale

**Project for the Experimental Art Series, Rosario**, 1968

See pps 117-8 of *Participation*, 2006 by Clare Bishop P0937  
Gallery private view attendees locked in the gallery until they break the window to get out.

Nikki S Lee

**Nikki S Lee's Projects**, 2001

P0330

Nikki 'performs' as a member of each 'tribe', insinuating herself into people's real lives, leading up to a candid snap of her and her new friends. The participants are not aware that they are part of an artwork.

Richard Dedomenici

**Cable Ties**, 2004

On Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination:  
13 Experiments in Hope, 2005  
D0261

Intervention by the security guards completes the work.

Fiona Templeton

**You, The City**, 1988

V0581

I'm not including this because of the audience member's participation. Instead, because this work frames all street life as a potential performance, anyone walking down the street was an unwitting performer too.

Oreet Ashery

**Marcus Fisher**, 2003

Can be found in *Dancing with Men*, P1260 p 34 onwards.  
This outing of Oreet's alter ego saw him/her dancing with orthodox Jewish men in a male-only disco in Israel.

Mark McGowan

**Artist Keys Cars**, 2005

D0324

Shows *London Tonight* being unwittingly manipulated into making a sensationalising feature about Mark's (in fact non-existent) car-keying.

Rebecca French and Andrew Mottershead create art that specifically explores ideas of identity, social ritual and the everyday public and private realms in which they are played out. Through participatory works, they subvert sites and engage people complicitly in the creative act.

*For once it is art that actually achieves the popular ideal of raising your awareness of everyday life.* Art Monthly

Working together since 1999, they've recently intervened into the National Review of Live Art and presented work in the UK at Tate Modern, Tate Liverpool, the ICA, Arnolfini and East International. They are currently undertaking an international project with communities formed by local shops in Brazil, China, Turkey, Romania and Slovenia, culminating in a solo exhibition and publication with Site Gallery, Sheffield in late 2009. They are keeping a blog as they travel from city to city.

[shopsproject.blogspot.com](http://shopsproject.blogspot.com)  
[www.frenchmottershead.com](http://www.frenchmottershead.com)