

Introduction

Handsworth Songs taught me that unconventional use of conventional media – artists creating a film about the riots - develops traction with the general public. Platforms like YouTube and Instagram enable disparate groups to form around artists.

What if we could create a similar space that draws online audiences into third spaces to have authentic experiences with art? The shift of viewers from passive to active participants in the artwork, is explored by Claire Bishop in her book *Artificial Hells*.

Participatory arts activities, according to Bishop, see the shift of the audience member from 'viewer' to 'collaborator' or 'co-producer.' In Ben Walmsley's work he describes the digital art space as "Ito (2007) relates this culture shift to the concept of “networked publics”, which he invokes to explain how online audiences engage actively with media to the point where they co-create or even reinvent it. This provides an excellent illustration of what Cova (1999) calls “the linking value of consumption”." -10

ARCHIVE -Justification for the concept

I propose a digital resource that gives you advice on exhibiting artwork in third spaces as well as housing past projects & artists. A digital platform would engage with a wider audience and create a buzz around artwork.

"The study's key findings indicated that responsive digital platforms can democratise critical exchange; foster slower, more reflective critique; and positively shift perceptions of unfamiliar artforms amongst non-attenders." -10

These Ideas and contacts would not be limited to the traditional arts. This platform would reach out to other disciplines, craftspeople and content creators to develop ideas around a theme, bypassing some of the traditional gatekeepers of Art and Design. As Ruangrupa's work in Indonesia has showed:

“In 2022, Ruangrupa topped the [ArtReview](#) Power 100 list for their defense of artistic freedom amidst the controversies of documenta fifteen, as well as their influential mode of nonhierarchical working that continues to inspire ongoing collaborations across the art world.”⁻⁵

It would be an open platform bringing together diverse and conflicting individuals to have open and nuanced conversations about difficult subjects. Within the manifesto, there needs to be a commitment to unbiased and broad ideas being a space of free speech. A space for ideas with some moderation to safeguard against abuse and exploitation.

Friction between juxtaposing views is a creative environment in itself. There is always some negative in any group space and challenging established ideas within a community is healthy and stops the rot of inbred entrenched tropes.

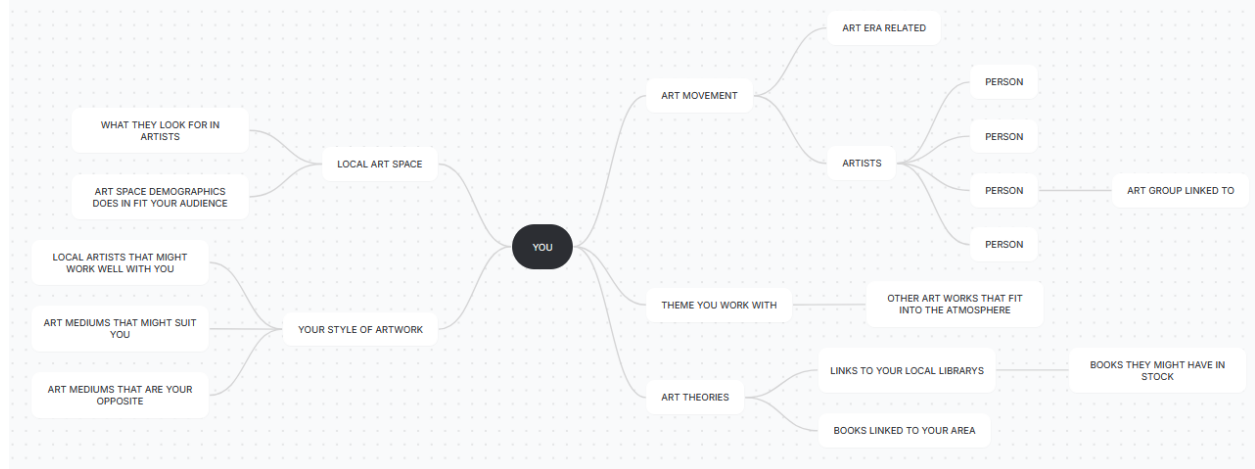
THE ENGINE COLLECTIVE -Flow diagram

Creating art in third spaces could be daunting. Connecting with experienced artists and having tried and tested examples would be a boon. The Engine Collective is a concept that brings together these elements.

"In particular, although theories are starting to emerge regarding the positive impact that pre-performance context can exert on audiences' anticipation and ultimate enjoyment of a live artistic event (see Brown & Novak, 2007)"⁻¹⁰

The idea is to have a branching spider diagram of thoughts around networking, spaces, further research and barriers you might find. This would empower groups of artists to engage with the community and authorities, but also to realise the cultural and economic benefit that art can bring to a community. For instance, the Edinburgh Fringe creates £1bn in benefits for Scotland:

“The London-based Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) calculates that the annual event ... generates £500m in direct spend... that pumps a further £560m into Edinburgh’s economy and beyond.” -7



THEME BASED work in Third Spaces

This Engine would be developed to take an artist's theme and connect it to other producers and a third space that would complement their concept.

If you were looking to create an exhibition about the microaggressions faced by Jamaican people in the UK. This archive could offer up analogous West African artists who emigrated to the UK or artists who use the same media, colour palette or scale. Third Spaces may include a Football Stadium or a hairdresser's.

After this there are 5 factors that control third space art exhibitions: Audience, Space, Permissions, Health and Safety/Security & Connections.

Audience

Who are you trying to reach? Third spaces are fantastic for reaching different audiences who might never go to a gallery. Thinking about the foot traffic through third spaces will help to shape the project itself. For instance, having age-appropriate art where children frequent or more challenging art in a gym.

Space

Third spaces are diverse. Building an art project that reflects that space is key. Is the architecture Brutalist? Is it a sheltered area where more fragile work can be displayed? Does the area have a sound limit? Using maps of the local area created by volunteers, the system would have a bank of third spaces.

Permissions

Gaining trust and permission from all interested parties is key to making artwork in a third space. A list of contacts in the council, business improvement districts and the police would be necessary for using a street, but it would be different in a library or school.

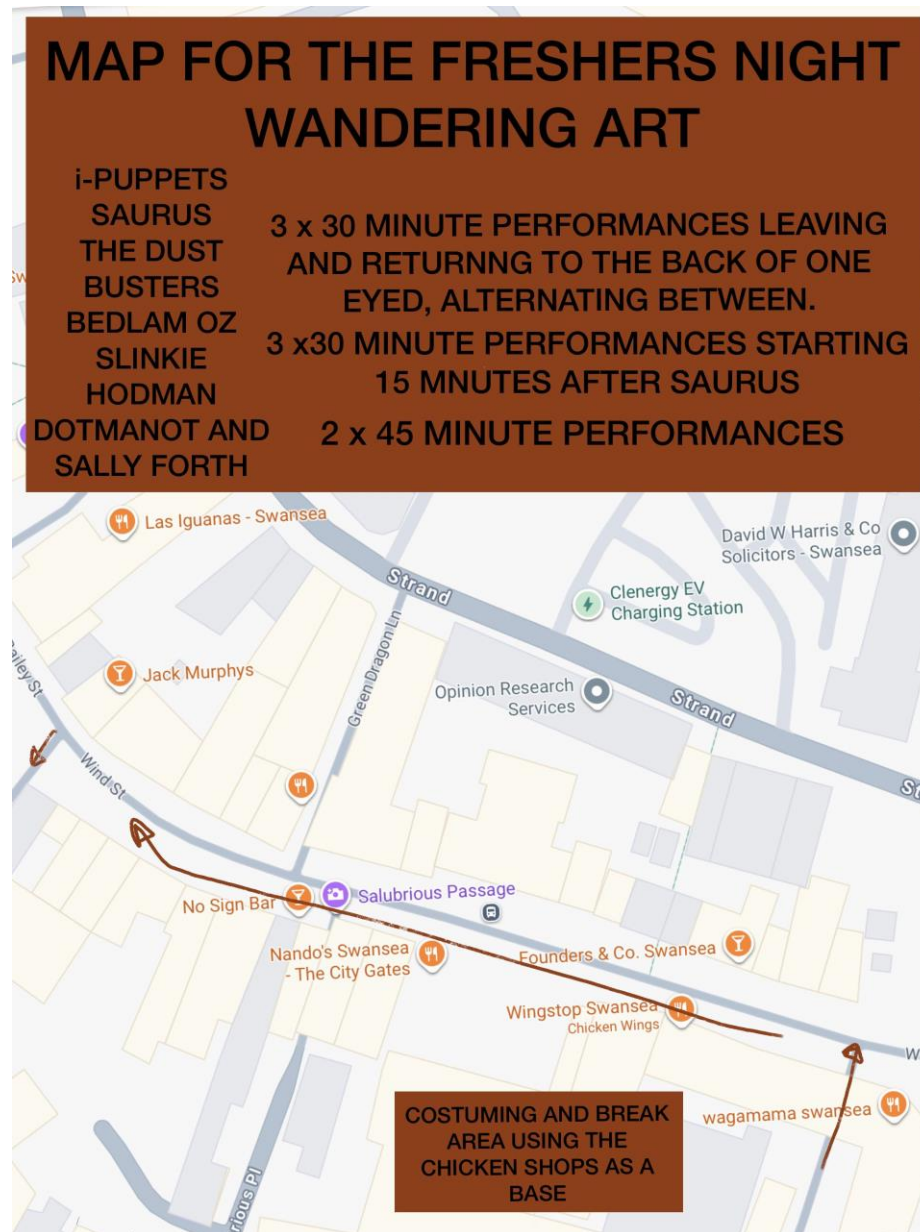
Health and Safety/Security

This is key in establishing a successful and repeatable process. Ensuring that the artists, the audience and the environment are undamaged. This builds a relationship with each established group. Bespoke risk assessments would be available for any third-space exhibition and would be created in partnership with the correct authorities.

Connections

Connecting to local businesses, artists, galleries, etc. Developing a network of people within an area. Building links between people who care about these third spaces and want to exhibit in them.

FRESHERS FRESCO – A Performance Art Exhibition



"Public art is not an art form. It is a principle whereby the involvement and activities of artists contribute to the identity, understanding, appreciation, and enhancement of public places. This is best achieved through collaboration with artists in the conception, design development and implementation of changes to the built and managed environment."-3

There is a brief period on Wind Street, Swansea, before the 11 o'clock drinkers and after midday shoppers, when the street is eerily quiet. It becomes a daunting barrier to freshers, especially those not fond of drinking or who haven't yet made friends in the area. Having a collection of performing artists in that intermission time would give people a reason to get out, something to bond over and an excuse for fun and prepare for the evening.

“Often, the most successful public art will provide the public with an unexpected experience, often challenging people's perceptions. This will, in turn, cultivate dialogue and create a new understanding of the value of the art. Art can invoke strong emotions and can change public opinion. This is one of the reasons why the role of art in public places has been a matter of considerable controversy.”-1

In this essay, established performance art groups are used, but it could equally be a community event run by art students. Making their own costumes, walking acts around and messing with the freshers. Performance art is immediate art; it's almost impossible to feel no emotion when chunked into a confusing situation. This gives people something to laugh or be scared about and makes chatting to people a lot less threatening. This is the purpose of Freshers week and in a city of many universities, this could be a highlight.

“The earliest experience of art must have been that it was incantatory, magical; art was an instrument of ritual.” -7.

i-PUPPETS



A mixture of black theatre and rod puppeteering, the i-PUPPETS are a colony of glowing eyes on thin insectoid frames. Bright LED heads make them perfect for touring through town at night. A group of puppets means they can be flexible in their distribution, either working in

groups or solo. You could imagine them coming out of an alley by the One-Eyed Willy's bar and trailing along the darker edges of Wind Street.



Saurus are large scale full body puppets created by Dutch theatre company Close-Act. Necks that bend and jaws that snap, the Saurus tower over people and skim the tops of buildings. Stealing hats, spitting free drinks cards at people or threatening to eat someone's glass. These monsters are built to be interactive and would create a buzz.



The Dust Busters Mildred, Mavis and Martha are a troupe of cleaning ladies that could want nothing more than a cup of tea and a sit down. The banter and cheekiness of the Dust Busters reminds me a lot of my Mamgu and Aunties teasing me and my siblings is very nostalgic and for a new student.

Wandering around on student night polishing glasses wiping down windows giving students a hard time about how scruffy they look.

BEDLAM OZ SLINKY

The bedlam slinkies have been performing the show slinkie love for over 20 years. The mish mash of dance, bizarre body art and children's toys these whimsical street performers are intriguing.



HODMAN DOTMANOT AND SALLY FORTH THE FLYING BUTRESS

This comedic duo are entrancing, like having Jim Henderson come alive in the Highstreet.

Audience

Freshers are mainly young adults, this being their first proper experience being away from home. An event that encourages students who don't drink alcohol could give Wind Street a positive edge.

Space

Having a balance between open spaces and buildings gives the performers space to move about and interact, while having somewhere nearby for a green room makes Wind St a good location.

Permissions

Working with the Swansea Business Improvement District based in Wind Street would bring in engagement and funding from the local bars and shops.

Coordinating with the local council on when the acts would be performing.

Health and Safety

For the safety of the performers, having guides to warn crowds and point out any dangerous objects in the way. These guides could have walkie-talkies to warn the police/paramedics of any violent or dangerous behaviour.

Connections

Working with local businesses, Swansea BID, Police, Paramedics and Universities and establishing a plan for Freshers.

CONCLUSION

There seems to be a vacuum between the public engagement in digital spaces and artwork in third spaces. Digital media has shown that the public is interested in art but struggles to engage with it in the real world. Building a network that can organise large scale third space events is a solution to this issue.

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