

Collaborative Thinking

An analysis of collaborative methods and methodologies



COLLABORATION
IS THE ANSWER
BUT WHAT IS
THE QUESTION

Collaboration

‘work jointly, especially in a literary or artistic production.’ (Oxford English Reference Dictionary, 1995)

Most arts practices may be seen to involve some form of collaboration; collaboration with an audience or client, with objects, with culture, with curators, with agencies and with other practitioners.

Collaboration may be considered an umbrella term incorporating numerous approaches to the practice of working to shared agendas and it has been suggested 'that collaboration goes beyond achieving a common objective and breaks down the need to identify individual contributions.' (Fremantle 2012).

Collaboration between practitioners

Collaborative means to work together, or in conjunction with another, to engage in united labour. The most common way for artists to collaborate is with other artists. Duos like Ulay and Abramović, Gilbert & George, Wood and Harrison create works that rely on mutual dependency.



Ulay and Abramović, *Rest Energy*, 1980

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcaaVZrUC44>

Other practitioners collaborate with individuals from different skill backgrounds like musicians, scientists, or with a wider community.



Gareth Kennedy, *Immediate Money*, 2009, The Irish Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale

Eight Dublin buskers (street musicians) were facilitated by Gareth Kennedy to travel to Venice and play in civic spaces negotiated for them on behalf of the Irish Pavilion over the course of the Venice Biennale. In an economic transaction of 'like for like' their collected earnings were gathered within a vitrine presented in the pavilion. The buskers were reimbursed in full with fresh notes from a safe within a secure bank-like exchange room.



Gareth Kennedy, *Immediate Money*, 2009, The Irish Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale

The Collective

Loosely defined, an arts **collective** is a group of arts practitioners working together to achieve a common objective.

Practitioners working within a collective are united by shared ideologies, aesthetics and, or, political beliefs.

For example, The dada group, represented the psychological consequences of the loss of a pre-modern existence and reflected that in their art. They spoke for a collective group, in this case those mentally and physically scarred by the First World War. The dada 'collective' placed emphasis on social experience. They moved their performances from the cabaret halls to the streets.

Collaboration with an organisation

- Grayson Perry in Collaboration with the British Museum.
- Grayson Perry curates an installation of his new works alongside objects made by unknown men and women throughout history from the British Museum's collection.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsgfNfXwPs0>



Interactivity

- Interactive art emerged in the late 1950s in parallel with artists' desires to find less alienating and exclusive environments in which to show art. As the street, the warehouse or the shop front became their choice of venue, the art also became more participatory and inclusive.
- In 1971 Gordon Matta-Clark cooked a pig under Brooklyn Bridge and served 500 pork sandwiches as part of the performance.





Langlands & Bell



Conversation Seat

1986

The consciousness of two observers observing one another and wanting to present themselves with equal value.



Collaboration and Conversation

The non-oppositional process of collaborative conversation resists the inherited culture of negative dialectics (thesis/antithesis). Collaborative dialogue is also theoretically opposed to monologism and its collective premise positions dialogic triumph as an act of futility.

'nobody is trying to win. Everybody wins if anybody wins' (Bohm, 2004, On Dialogue).

Community Arts

- **Community art** is artistic activity that is based in a community setting, characterised by interaction or dialogue with the community and often involving a professional artist collaborating with people who may not otherwise engage in the arts.
- The notion of community art evolved in the post Second World War era out of the concept of cultural democracy, the term used to describe practices in which culture and artistic expression are generated by individuals and communities rather than by institutions of central power.
- In the 1960s, when social change was seen as possible, community art was seen as a way of giving a voice to society's disenfranchised.

Tenantspin - <https://vimeo.com/78154692>



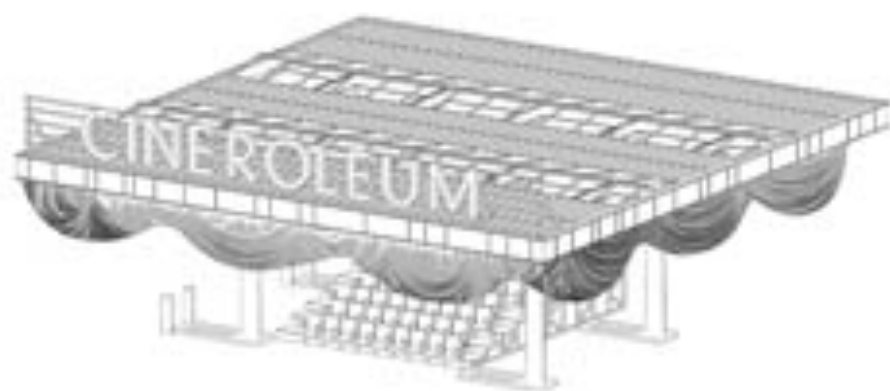
In its formative years, tenantspin took the form of a Superchannel, a web-streaming platform and live-chat facility created before the rise of Youtube, that enabled tenants to produce online content. This allowed tenants to connect with their neighbours and the global community in real-time. Webcast content ranged in subject matter from serious topics relating to housing or welfare, to light-hearted subjects close to the tenant's hearts.

Assemble

Assemble are a London-based collective who work across the fields of art, design and architecture to create projects in tandem with the communities who use and inhabit them.

The Cineroleum was a self-initiated project that transformed a petrol station on Clerkenwell Road into a cinema.









The Social Turn

The term was coined by the art historian Claire Bishop in her 2006 essay *The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents*. Art that operates under the umbrella of the social turn tends to happen outside museums or galleries. Because much of the art is collaborative and focuses on constructive social change, it is rarely commercial or object based – two things that are seen as elitist and consumerist.

When discussing the concept of the social turn, the founder of situationism Guy Debord has alluded to his promotion of a participatory practice in which he wished to eliminate the spectator's position.

Collaboration within the visual arts can assume many forms: 'groups of artists, circles, associations, networks, constellations, partnerships, alliances, coalitions, contexts and teamwork' (Lind, 2007, The Collaborative Turn)

Collaboration within the visual arts is multifarious yet the dominant and persistent assumption is that of an alliance of multiple authors that aspires to disrupt a 'singular subjectivity'.

