

## A Brief History of Collaboration

David Trigg

In the majority of creative disciplines collaboration comes as a matter of course. With rare exceptions, film makers, dancers, architects and musicians all conspire with others in the creation of their art. Within the realm of fine art however, the notion of the artist as a solitary, self-sufficient genius has been an enduring concept since the Renaissance. But how accurate is this picture? The belief that Old Master paintings were created by solitary artists is a persistent myth; yet far from working alone, the master would usually just paint the parts requiring the most skill while his team of budding apprentices did the rest of the work. Due to the collaborative nature of the Old Masters' studios it can often be very difficult to correctly attribute their paintings. But the fact that attribution is of such a concern reveals a contemporary obsession with authenticity – the modernist view that artworks must be the product of a single prodigious artist.

As a reaction against this modernist mindset and also as part of a broader restructuring of art itself, the 1960s saw a marked shift away from solitary

studio-based practices towards more open and collaborative models of art making. Radical groups such as Fluxus were testing the limits of art and in so doing were ushering in the age of post-modernity. An abundance of new media and experimental ways of working were adopted by artists during that time, many of which – such as video and installation – were particularly well suited to collaborative approaches. Rather than individual expression, it was unified ideas that were being pursued by artists such as Bernd & Hilla Becher, Art & Language, Gilbert & George and the Boyle Family et al, who all opposed the prevailing modernist myth of the artist as singular hero.

Thirty years later artist collaborations had become ubiquitous, with Langlands & Bell, Jake & Dinos Chapman, Jane & Louise Wilson and Tim Noble & Sue Webster among others all featuring prominently on the international art stage. In fact, collaboration became so fashionable during the 1990s that some artists even concocted fictional partners; the most well known example being Bob & Roberta Smith, the pseu-

donym of artist Patrick Brill. Collaboration has since continued to burgeon, proliferating to the point where it is now generally accepted as just another one of the myriad ways in which artists may choose to work. In recent years several collaborative duos have been nominated for the Turner Prize and, in 2004 – indicating just how established such practices have become – the London based sculptural duo Pennicott + Fleming became the first artist collaboration to be accepted onto the Sculpture MA at the Royal College of Art.

# double vision

## 2009 9 COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

But artist pairings are just one of many models of collaboration existing today. Increasingly artists are looking outside of the art world, seeking to engage with a range of different contexts. For instance, 2004 Turner Prize winner Jeremy Deller's practice is characterised by his collaborations with non-art groups or communities, whether it be working with a brass band to recreate Acid House anthems (Acid Brass, 1997) or collaborating with the residents of a Yorkshire pit village to re-stage one of the bloodiest battles of the 1980s miners' strikes (The

Battle of Orgreave, 2001). Many of the artists in Double Vision too have chosen to collaborate with non-visual arts professionals, from musicians to surfers, to anthropologists and kick boxers.

Today artists collaborate for many reasons. It may be to acquire a new skill or to access specialist knowledge; it may be to explore new territories in order to open up new possibilities in their practice; or it may be to once again challenge the notion of the lone, individual artist

creating luxury consumer goods to appease a voracious market. As evinced by the work in Double Vision, artists continue to collaborate in a range of diverse and exciting ways, often challenging preconceived ideas about how artists should operate. Hovering at the intersection of art and a multitude of other disciplines, contemporary collaboration asks how, where, with what and with whom art can be made in the 21st Century.

### The Operators

Alessandra Ausenda and Ruth Wall

Alessandra Ausenda is a visual artist working in the field of installation, sculpture and site specific projects. Her recent work includes the use of photographic images and audience participation. Ruth Wall is a professional musician. She plays the harp, the piano and composes. She is involved in new music, commissioning and touring works by living composers.

Alessandra and Ruth have wanted to work together for some time and through this collaboration they explore shared artistic and political issues. A recent publication and film 'Gomorra', by Roberto Saviano exposing chilling statistics on the criminal aspects of the fashion industry in Italy provided some of the background material to the piece. Research into the conditions of workers in China further informed the content.

Exploring the politics of 'work' resulted in the construction of a large cake like dress encasing sewing machines. The sound was created as an integral element to the structure using sewing machines exclusively. The piece raises questions of engagement on a number of levels as well as exploring the often extremely exploitative working conditions of the garment industry and related criminal activity. The issue of au-

diene participation is raised indirectly by the implied accountability of today's consumer. What do we desire, aspire to and ultimately endorse? What are the consequences and hidden realities?

'We have explored a shared and current issue by drawing from our individual practices. The journey has been an exchange of viewpoints and dialogues that have evolved over a considerable period and deepened along the way. By combining our skills we not only have a visual and oral result, but also a participatory performance. This experience has enabled us to give form to our intentions in a multi sensory way, enriching each other's practice.'

Alessandra Ausenda

'It has been an exciting opportunity to work with an artist from another discipline, whose work I have an affinity with. Working together with Alessandra has stretched and challenged my practice, resulting in an exciting and different way of creating and experiencing sound.'

Ruth Wall

Lunchtime talk  
18 December 12:30  
Opening event  
18 December 7-9 pm

Jessica Cooper and Richard Hawkins

Jessica Cooper is a visual artist who has been working in Cornwall since graduating from Goldsmith's College, London in 1989. She began surfing five years ago. Richard Hawkins has been surfing since childhood and in 1993 started shaping surfboards in California. In 1996 he moved to West Penwith, Cornwall where he met Jessica. Both have a shared passion for the sea which began in childhood, has shaped their careers and in many ways dictates their lives today.

They have made a book which charts their lives from childhood to the present day. They were assisted by a graphic designer, Paula Johnson. The making of the book became an all consuming and cathartic process, taking on a life of its own. It unearthed forgotten childhood photos by the sea, teenage memories, reflections on friends and family life. It retraces the development of their respective careers and reaffirms their love of surfing and the sea.

The clinical purity and space found within the canvas frame and the blank of the surfboard, is reminiscent of the open space of the sea. This space is only interrupted by the splash of colour found in a painted object on the canvas or the inclusion of coloured fins on the board - as a boat crossing the water or a

### Along the same lines

rock form jutting above the horizon. 'I was fascinated by the process of shaping a surf board and the similarities to my painting process. In both, there is the juxtaposition of design and craft, with a subjective and deep rooted knowledge of the chosen subject. The collaboration has made me question much about my life, personally and professionally, at times it has been a painful process but also rewarding. It has been a great learning curve to work with other people instead of preferred isolation and I have realised that I can push my career in new directions, other than painting.'

Jessica Cooper.

'Our choice to collaborate on a book took us both out of our comfort zones. The more we looked, the more common ground we found; personal history, similar interests in the sea and surfing and working solo.'

Richard Hawkins.

Lunchtime talk  
27 November 12:30

Bernard Irwin and Howard Silverman

Bernard Irwin and Howard Silverman are visual artists who both, in different ways focus on landscape. They met at Artspace Bristol (now Spike Island) over 25 years ago. At that time Howard's primary interest was in painting and Bernard's with sculpture; curiously that position is now reversed.

Bernard is strongly influenced by the environs in which he lives and works. He has created a substantial garden with his partner Claire. The exuberance and fecundity of the garden and the multitude of effects exerted by light are reflected in his paintings, drawings and collages.

Howard's landscapes have evolved, initially, through an exploration of materials, primarily corrugated paper, which he has used to map or 'draw' urban interiors. Double skinned ribbons flood rooms, tumble down staircases or rise and fall in a topography of rippling sand dunes, deeply pocketed mountain ranges or city canyons, within whose spaces the history of a journey are buoyed, buried and implied, and the 'secrets' of an undercurrent glimpsed.

Always keen on each other's work but never having previously collaborated, they saw Double Vision as an opportunity for critical dialogue, exchange of ideas and mutual support. Their

studios being two hundred miles apart (Bernard's near Newlyn and Howard's in Bristol) has been a key factor in shaping their working method and its outcome. There has been a continuous dialogue, exchange of ideas and information via email, using images and text, punctuated by studio and site visits, culminating in an intense four weeks activity in Cornwall up to and including installation.

'It was our intention from the outset to work with the architecture of the Exchange gallery. The location of our piece in the area of the gallery where people arrive and leave the exhibition has been a key element in our thinking about this work. It evolved specifically to sit within the space of the building and exhibition; an introduction and an acknowledgement of the gallery as a kind of theatre. However, it is primarily a piece about the creative process, the struggle and aspirations that all artists face.'

Bernard Irwin and Howard Silverman

Lunchtime talk  
13 November 12:30

### Get in the Ring

Ken Turner and Julie Kitchen

Ken Turner is a painter, performance and video artist. He has performed and exhibited at Tate Britain, the ICA, The Drill Hall, Acorn Theatre and a number of venues and streets throughout Cornwall and abroad in Berlin, Bonn and Amsterdam.

Julie Kitchen is a Muay Thai Kick Boxing World Champion. She has been invited to fight before the King of Thailand to defend her world title in December and has travelled extensively with fights in Europe and Asia. She and her team run workshops in martial arts and kickboxing at her gym in Penzance.

Rebecca Weeks — Jane Whitaker — will lead the critical discourse

'Get in the Ring' is a cultural extravaganza involving Thai boxers, artists, and audience members in an analysis of drawing as an extension into motivation, vision and cultural values. Alongside the main programme of fights, workshops, music, food and drawing there will be an ongoing critical engagement with drawing as the vehicle for new expressions and interpretations of time, space and movement.

'As a painter and performer I feel that drawing in this respect is a means by

which a meaningful discourse in a structural and stimulating manner can take place; wherein its philosophical nuances and dimensionality are not withheld. What is actually important in the drawing itself is how the thought within it came into existence. Pictorial structure in drawing, as we know, is an extremely direct method of making thoughtful marks. As direct even, as a word uttered in a moment's breath, as direct as a kick to the head, but made with a considered and learnt yet intuitive grammar held in the gymnasium of the mind.'

Ken Turner

Julie has experience of sculpture through her uncle's work, and is fascinated with the idea of the immediacy of drawing as a counter measure against the unreflective static photograph. New interpretations are for her a way of seeing things differently and hopefully, drawing as it will be practiced in this collaborative event, will bring to fruition this realisation.

Lunchtime talk  
23 October 12:30  
Opening Performance  
16 October 8:15 - 9 pm

John Keys and Graham Fitkin

John Keys is a visual artist whose work is often concerned with journeys, particularly in relation to the natural environment. He records the passage of people or elements through a landscape, focusing on marks and traces left behind. Graham Fitkin is a UK composer who works with acoustic and electronic instruments, collaborates with dance, film and digital media alongside concert orchestral and chamber music. 2009 included commissions for London Chamber Orchestra, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra and BBC Concert Orchestra.

John and Graham's collaboration arose from a common interest in a particular beach in West Cornwall, specifically its tidal rhythms and shifting sand bars and the conceptual concerns these suggested. They spent intensive seven day periods on the beach during specific Spring tides. John made sequential drawings of the tide line from a point on the beach on 28 days during a year long period. Graham recorded audio from the sand bar, notated aural data and produced 28 minutes of new music which was performed by the BBC Concert Orchestra. Frequent discussion informed the development of the music and visual content and helped shape the final work which was designed specifically for the ramp area.

### Tidal 28 minutes

Tidal explores the interaction and evolving symbiosis between sea and land and the metaphorical significance of this precarious 'edge'. It observes how the sea constantly reveals and conceals the land, reminiscent of the push and the pull of promise and loss. It refers to boundaries that are simultaneously grounded and transient.

'We started out from idle conversation, shared interests and notions of passing time. We pondered that nebulous magical area hovering between pre-determined data and a reality governed by chance. I have found the exchange of perspectives and ideas on the same phenomena not only exciting but surprisingly illuminating. John has taught me a lot about things I thought I knew.'

Graham Fitkin

'The prospect of working with a musical composer such as Graham was exciting and challenging. The subsequent discovery of the parallels in our creative processes led to an experience that was both energising and highly productive. The collaboration has helped me push the boundaries of my own practice.'

John Keys

Lunchtime talk  
11 December 12:30

### Practice and research: medium and meaning

Bren Unwin and Helen Cornish

Bren Unwin is a visiting research associate at the University of Hertfordshire. She is a Fellow and council member of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers. Helen Cornish is an anthropologist interested in the politics of knowledge, and how it is negotiated and mobilized within given contexts. For the past year, Bren and Helen have been working on an AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) funded project that is addressing the communication of non-traditional knowledge in the Creative and Cultural Arts.

Within their collaboration, Bren and Helen explore some of the issues that arise for academic research when it includes creative practice. An e-mail dialogue has emerged between Bren and Helen that focuses on some of the issue that exist for the production of academic research when it includes art practice. This e-mail dialogue, shows alongside Bren's art practice, examines ideas about academic research that can be associated with Bren's practice. Within her practice-based research, Bren examines what happens to the meaning that might be associated with art practice when the medium is changed; ideas, actions and materials are explored in association with the dynamic and technologically-mediated character

of experience. Using projected imagery and printmaking media, Bren's artwork has arisen from ideas, actions and materials associated with a redundant Cornish tin-miners' cage. Helen's perspective on the context of arts research explores how research practices may be negotiated that fulfill standard requirements for scholarly investigation while also keeping arts practice at its core.

Working with an anthropologist has brought to light questions that arise about art practice when it is viewed from a research perspective. Exploring some of these questions in a dialogue with Helen has led to a significant reappraisal of my own practice.

Bren Unwin

The Non-traditional Knowledge and Communication Project aims to investigate the dynamics of art research in academia. Double Vision provides a valuable opportunity to work with Bren and explore these key concerns from the dual perspectives of practice and public engagement.

Helen Cornish

Lunchtime talk  
4 December 12:30

Gareth Edwards and Liz LeGrice

Gareth Edward is a painter who regularly exhibits at the Hart Gallery, London and venues in Cornwall including Lemon Street, Truro.

Liz Le Grice is the Art Librarian at Cornwall Libraries and has built up the Art Collection for over 30 years. It is a county-wide resource housed at Penzance Library in Morrab Road.

The idea came to Gareth as he noticed many artists coming out of the library loaded with books to help them with their work. He wanted to make transparent the working processes of the numerous artists working in Cornwall whose primary source is not direct observation of the figure or landscape, but instead tertiary information such as photographs, books, and magazines. It was an opportunity to highlight how many artists use these resources and to celebrate the value of the thousands of books in the art collection.

Exchange of Ideas brings a substantial proportion of the Cornwall Libraries' Art collection to the Exchange where it can be accessed in a Gallery context. In addition Gareth has selected six painters who regularly use the collection as a resource. Each week one artist's work will be displayed with the source material that has influenced it. Penzance library

### Exchange of Ideas

will be showing works by the six artists on the empty bookshelves.

'Working with Liz Le Grice has been a pleasure from the very first meeting. Her enthusiasm and intelligence has been tremendous as is her knowledge of the arts section of the library without which the project wouldn't have worked. Indeed as the project has developed it has become in some way a clarion call to highlight the brilliance of the local resource.'

Gareth Edwards

'It is the 'collection' itself which fascinates me. It often seems to have a life of its own. I can cast my eye over a shelf of books and recognise which artists requested or suggested them for stock. This makes the shelves come alive for me but is a difficult thing to describe as it is quite an abstract concept. It has been a great privilege to have the funding to create this collection with the help of artists from throughout Cornwall. I work to some extent in isolation so when this idea was put forward I embraced it'

Liz LeGrice

Wednesday Lunchtime talks  
every Wednesday 12:30  
Opening event  
30 October 4-8 pm

### The Revenants: Collaboration with Palmer White

Jesse Leroy Smith is a visual artist based in Penzance. Alongside a studio practice he curates exhibitions and has recently produced 'Revolver Art Cornwall'. Paul Becker is an artist and writer who now lives in Berlin.

Jesse and Paul met 10 years ago at the Royal Academy of Arts. While working as art technicians on shows there such as 'Aztecs' and 'The Genius of Rome' they began to share ideas about esoteric and Outsider art. They have established an extraordinary relationship with the work of the Outsider Artist, Palmer White. Little is known about the true identity of White but it is believed he has spent most of his life in Cornwall. Over the years his work has become increasingly ephemeral. He takes found objects, reforms them, imbues them with his own secret meanings and then leaves them around West Cornwall, for locals or bemused tourists to discover.

Jesse and Paul have been involved in a form of ideas exchange with him. Via a complex system of mapping, tracking and guesswork they attempt to discover the exact time and location of White's next piece. They then document it and make a response, an echo, which they hope, will, in turn, be responded to by White.

'A shared interest in Esoteric and Visionary art has led us to the work of the legendary Outsider/Environmental artist Palmer White. By using White's set of core beliefs as a shared receptacle for ideas, we have contrived to inhabit an external persona: his. This negation of our own artistic persona allows us to come up with ideas and images away from the self-imposed restrictions of regular studio-based practice.

By embedding our collaboration within the basic methodology of White's highly unusual work, we have, like him, made all our work together in the landscape. The spontaneous development of ideas occur in situ and owing to the presence of an implied third party, are referred on the spot and either sanctioned or immediately abandoned.

Whether this activity will have a sustained impact on our individual practice is impossible to say but what is clear is that a multitude of fascinating ideas and issues have presented themselves.

Lunchtime talk  
20 November 12:30

### Death of the Author

during the making of the film. Karen's animation differs inasmuch as it makes use of the materiality and mechanism of the media itself, and by conducting a glimpse of an incoherent and increasingly demented and discontinuous mind.

'The film material and the opportunity to work so closely with my Dad, has led me to explore a theme in a much more direct and personal way than I ever could have imagined. It has been great to walk a parallel path with Karen, and for our friendship to have a slightly different focus.'

Kate Walters

'I suppose every outcome or the journey towards it discloses various degrees of the unforeseen, of realization, revelation, recognition. We have maintained the dialogue and sense of authorship throughout the work. I have always been curious about how to unpack those experiences, how we arrive at the work and convey meaning beyond the personal. For me collaboration gives expression to this dialogue.'

Karen Lorenz

Lunchtime talk  
6 November 12:30

The collaboration is primarily a dialogue between a naturalistic, true-to-life vision and an abstract, slightly surreal, detached outlook, which is reflected in their use of the moving image and the framing of the work. Kate's film, 'Towards the end of life', documents the last months of her father's life. She found her father spoke with greater candour, warmth and humour when the camera was running and that their fragile relationship found a different footing