



Community Maker and The Portland Inn Project
Anna Francis

Project Details

Name: Anna Francis

Title of Output: Community Maker and
The Portland Inn Project

Years: 2015 – 2020

Output Type: Other

Associated URLs:

<https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/lists/48/>

<https://www.theportlandinnproject.com>

<https://theportlandinnproject.tumblr.com>

The Portland Inn Project Header Image

The Portland Inn Project logo and Community
Members, 2019.



Introduction

Description

Community Maker (2015-2017) and *The Portland Inn Project* (2016-present) explore how participatory arts events can influence community development in deprived urban areas.

Community Maker focused on an area of Stoke-on-Trent where the City Council sold houses for £1 in a process of social renewal and urban regeneration. Using Asset Based Community Development principles, Francis led local people in exploring personal stories, cultural identities, ceramic heritage and relationships to place through the making and sharing of food and through designing and making ceramic objects. This participation created space for people to shape priorities for local development and added further understanding of the role of the artist working in changing social contexts.

Community Maker led to *The Portland Inn Project*, a collaboration with artist Rebecca Davies. This project applies and tests the findings of *Community Maker*. It delivers artist and community-led change, principally through involving the community in the development of an architectural plan for a disused pub building, but also by using a cultural programme to develop and respond to priorities for local infrastructure and services and to draw down economic investment for the area.

Introduction

Dissemination

The research underpinning the work as well as the insights provided by the project have been discussed and disseminated via a public programme of events, workshops and displays in Stoke-on-Trent and via exhibition at The British Ceramics Biennial in 2015 and 2017, and AirSpace Gallery, 2018. The project has also been shared and used as a framework to develop resources for social artists at conferences and events in the UK including The Social Art Summit, Sheffield (2018) and The Social Art Summit, Tate Exchange (2019).

Community Maker was shared as one of 10 national case studies in the Local Government Association publication 'People, culture, place - The role of culture in placemaking' (2017). It was used to set out best practice approaches for how councils can work with culture to make positive change:

'Together, they show how the arts and culture can be used to improve a wide range of measurable outcomes, from education and wellbeing to economic growth and community cohesion.'

www.local.gov.uk. (n.d.). People, culture, place - The role of culture in placemaking. [online]

Available at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/people-culture-place-role-culture-placemaking>.

The project included the development of 'Raising the Roof', a temporary space which was shared and shortlisted for the RIBA Journal McEwan award for architectural design (2019), recognising architecture for the common good.

The project was publicised as one of 4 winners of The Whitegold International Ceramics Prize 2020:

'awarded to excellent projects that enable convivial community interactions through their engagement with food and clay.'

Austell Project. (2020). 2020 Prize Convivial Clay. [online] Available at: <https://austellproject.co.uk/2020-prize-shortlist/>

Introduction

Recognition and Dissemination by the Royal Institute of British Architects

In 2019, The *Portland Inn Project* was shortlisted for the RIBA Journal MacEwen Award, the architectural award that recognises architecture for the common good. The shortlisting put a spotlight on the *Raising the Roof* sub-project, a collaboration with Baxendale architects.

'We're looking for built projects that are of real and demonstrable benefit to society, something that architects are well-equipped to achieve.

This year's entry is especially strong and very varied, ranging from creative workspaces, loving restorations and temporary structures through affordable rural and urban housing and community hubs to large public infrastructure projects.

We had some difficulty whittling it down to the longlist of 36 you see here.' Pearman, H. (n.d.). *The MacEwen Award 2019: Longlist*. [online] www.ribaj.com. Available at: <https://www.ribaj.com/macewen/macewen-longlist-2019>



14 January 2019

Words: Hugh Pearman

Which are the 13 projects that have made it through to the shortlist?

We're delighted to announce the 13-strong shortlist for the RIBA MacEwen Award 2019.

This is our award that recognises architecture (with engineering and landscape) for 'the common good'. We're looking for built projects that are of real and demonstrable benefit to society, something that architects are well-equipped to achieve.

Here they are, in random order:

Sly's Close, Northleach, Gloucestershire: new Cotswold-vernacular homes by a charity for affordable local rent: designed by Mungo Park Architects.

Waterloo City Farm, Lambeth: educational charity HQ, city farm and architects' studio by Feilden Fowles.

Writ in Water, Reading: memorial to Magna Carta, by Runnymede by artist Mark Wallinger and Studio Octopi.

Knoctrop Weir foot and cycle bridge, Leeds: new pedestrian connection as part of flood relief works by Knight Architects.

Campbeltown Picture House, Kintyre: restoration of historic local cinema in remote rural area by Burrell Foley Fischer.

Raising the Roof, Stoke on Trent: artist-led re-usable temporary community structure as part of the Portland Inn Project. By Baxendale Studio.

St David's Hospice, Newport, Wales: care in-patient unit by KKE Architects.

Marklake Court, Kipling Estate Southwark: community-led 'right-sizing' homes addition to existing council estate, by Bell Phillips Architects.

Bethnal Green Mission Church development, London: new residential block also housing church, community halls and voluntary sector organisations, by Gatti Routh Rhodes Architects.

The Mustard Tree, Manchester: homeless charity HQ made out of low-grade 1950s warehouse by OMI Architects.

Burbridge Close, Dagenham: tiny house terraces for older people. An alley of little homes on former garages site for 'right-sizing' council tenants by Peter Barber Architects.

Star and Shadow Cinema, Newcastle upon Tyne: dilapidated warehouse becomes DIY community cinema and arts centre using volunteers and recycled materials. By MawsonKerr Architects.

Bridgend Inspiring Growth, Edinburgh: derelict farmhouse in council-estate area made into multi-skill training centre and community centre. By Halliday Fraser Munro.

Our judges are Julia Barfield, director of Marks Barfield; Yuli Cadney-Toh, architect director of BDP Bristol; Anisha Jogani, placemaking team leader of Croydon Council; Kathy MacEwen, town planner; and Hugh Pearman, editor of the RIBA

Introduction

Recognition and Dissemination by the Whitegold Prize

The *Portland Inn Project* was publicised as one of four winners of the Whitegold International Ceramic Prize 2020.

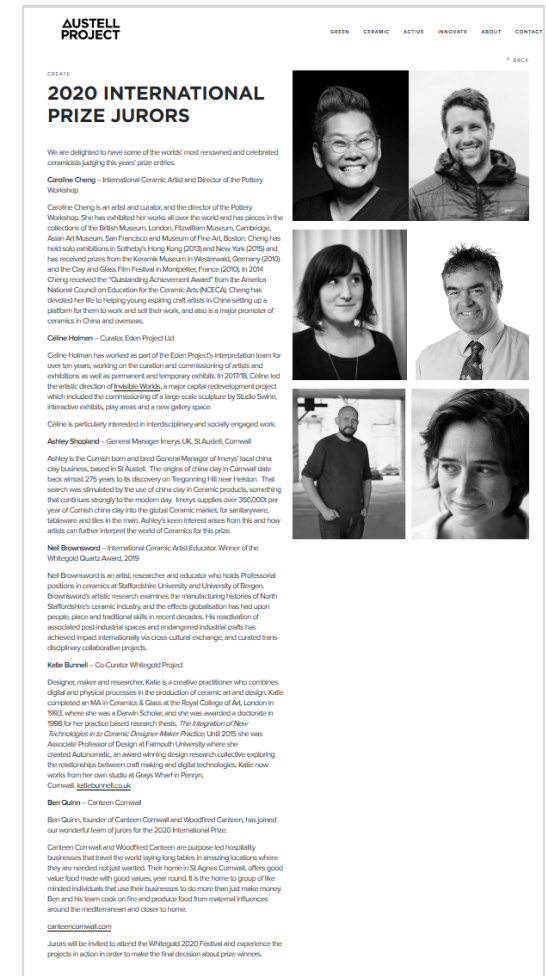
'For this year's theme of 'Convivial clay' we are looking for art, craft or design combining clay and food. We welcome work relating to cooking, eating, drinking, for creating a festive and sociable environment, ceramics for growing and even works that considered clay as a part of the soil and our life cycle.

The prize is open to artists and artist collectives from across the world and this year we received submissions from as far afield as South America. There were over 40 high quality submissions for this specialist area of practice through which the material and human connections between clay and food are explored and the following four were selected by the Whitegold jurors for the shortlist: Clayground Collective, Francesca Anfossi, The Portland Inn project, Grizedale Arts.

The four artist collectives shortlisted for the Whitegold International Ceramic Prize 2020 have requested an exciting and radical change in the way the Prize is delivered. They have volunteered to give up the prize money and use it instead to work together to deliver four socially engaged projects for communities in St Austell. The group which consists of Clayground Collective, Rochester Square, Grizedale Arts and Portland Inn Project say:

A prize seems inappropriate in these times, so we have mutually agreed to forego the prize money and reinvest the funds into projects for St Austell. We all share a similar ethos: an ambition to use art and making as part of the everyday, as a 'common' resource that enriches, connects and develops all of our lives. Our project activities will focus on encouraging communities to make with clay, engaging them in strong common themes of growing plants, making food and creating convivial events.'

<https://austellproject.co.uk/whitegold-prize-2020-finalists/>



The screenshot shows the 'AUSTELL PROJECT' website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links: GREEN, CERAMIC, ACTIVE, INNOVATE, ABOUT, CONTACT. Below the header, the main content area is titled '2020 INTERNATIONAL PRIZE JURORS'. It features a grid of six black and white portraits of the jurors. To the left of the portraits, there is a list of names and their roles, including Caroline Cheng, Cathie Holman, Ashley Sheppard, Neil Brownwood, Katie Burnell, and Ben Quinn. Each name is followed by a brief bio. The website has a clean, modern design with a white background and black text.

<https://austellproject.co.uk/international-prize-jurors-2020/>

Introduction

Statement

The *Community Maker* project focused on the Portland Street area of Stoke-on-Trent, where 33 houses were famously refurbished and sold for £1 each as part of a long-term process of social and urban redevelopment led by Stoke-on-Trent City Council. The project formed part of the cultural sector's response to place-making for the area. It brought long-term residents together with new arrivals to build an active and engaged community. Artist and researcher (and £1 home owner) Anna Francis approached the British Ceramics Biennial (BCB) to work with local people to explore personal histories, ambitions, and ideas through arts practice, which included making and sharing food and collaboratively designing and making ceramic objects, to then identify priorities for positive social and community change. The project was initially funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, later gaining additional funding from Arts Council England.

The findings led to the formation of *The Portland Inn Project*, a collaborative research project led by Francis and Rebecca Davies, which moves on from Community Maker to deliver community-led change based on the identified priorities.

The insights provided by the project have been discussed and disseminated via a public programme of events, workshops and displays on a public green space (Century Street, Stoke-on-Trent) and via exhibition displays at the BCB in 2015 and 2017, AirSpace Gallery, and The Potteries Museum Stoke-on-Trent (2018) as well as being shared at conferences and events in the UK and Estonia.

The research was featured in a Guardian online documentary on deprivation and renewal in Stoke-on-Trent, and *The Portland Inn Project* was used as a case study by Francois Matarasso in his book on Participatory Art, 'A Restless Art' (2019).

Aims and Objectives

Francis aimed to understand the role of the artist when working within particular social contexts and the role that an arts project might play in supporting positive change for a community. The initial 3-year project, *Community Maker*, engaged local people in making sessions as a method to explore and prioritise the needs of a community in an area of major urban renewal. *The Portland Inn Project* aims to deliver community-led change via an artist-led intervention in an area undergoing a significant housing renewal programme, and it explores how these interventions can raise community aspirations through a collaborative approach to developing infrastructure.



Research Questions

How can creative co-production processes create change in community perceptions about an area and engender a collective rethinking of overlooked resources that goes beyond economics to promote social and ecological values?

In an area experiencing high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, how can community safety and cohesion be improved through a programme of artist-led participatory activities and decision-making?

What alternative approaches to participatory development can be developed in order to involve stakeholders in planning and development processes in slow and meaningful ways to then deliver sustainable grass roots change?



Top: Raising The Roof (2018)

Arts Council funded 4-week project to test co-building a temporary community space as a workshop for redesigning the local pub building.

Bottom Left: Do We Want The Pub Forever? (2016)

Survey undertaken by resident to understand the commitment of the community, during The Portland Inn Development Project, 2016.

Bottom Right: Portland Pigeon Flatback (2019)

Residents press-moulding a Portland Pigeon, part of the BCB Flatbacks project, 2019.

Research Context

Community Maker and *The Portland Inn Project* focus on the Portland Street area of Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, an area which was previously earmarked for demolition as part of the Government Pathfinder scheme of housing renewal. The scheme was scrapped in 2010, leaving a fractured, partially boarded-up community, with many empty properties, high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, and scarce to non-existent community facilities. As part of a long-term process of social renewal and urban regeneration led by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, 33 houses were refurbished and sold for £1 each (in 2013). The projects set out to help re-build this community, including strengthening connections between original residents and the new £1 homeowners.

The project links back to early work from 2006 onwards, which looked at Regeneration initiatives and their impact on communities. This early work focused on housing renewal in post-industrial cities, and first-hand research into the regeneration sites of Stoke-on-Trent and Liverpool, particularly the Government Pathfinder Scheme's designated ZoO's (Zones of Opportunity) (i).



Terrace, Indefinable City Exhibition, AirSpace Gallery (2007)

Photographic banner of semi-demolished house, Lichfield St. Stoke-on-Trent, floorplan and inventory.

Research Context

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 rank Stoke-on-Trent as the 13th most deprived local authority (out of 317) in England (ii). 'Over half of areas in Stoke-on-Trent (51%) are classified among the most deprived 20% in England, and approximately one-third of areas (32%) fall in the most deprived 10%.'

Digging deeper into this via the Local Insights Data, to understand the local area, and levels of deprivation compared to Stoke-on-Trent as a whole (iii). As of December 2020, local area statistics show significant deprivation in the project area.

- Crime rank is 1,635 for project area. Stoke-on-Trent average is 10,409 (where 1 is most deprived).

- Violent and sexual offences are 35.8 per 1000 people. Stoke-on-Trent average is 30.3

- Education: over 16s in the area with no qualifications: 40.9%. Stoke-on-Trent average: 33.8%.

- Early Years scores - 28.9 (Lowest national score 17, max. 51). Stoke-on-Trent average score is 33.2

Small Area Mental Health: 77.57 (Nationally most deprived score: 66.32, max. is 199). Stoke-on-Trent average score is 73.99

Number of households on Universal credit: 31.7% (152). Stoke-on-Trent average is 18.1% (28,892)

Households in Poverty: 34.6%. Stoke-on-Trent average is 24.8%.



Portland Street Area, 2019

Drone Footage showing local area and geographical context. Film made as part of application to Creative Civic Change Programme Proposal, The Portland Inn Project 2019.

Research Context

The research process expands the framework of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) (iv) set out by John L. McKnight and John P. Kretzmann (1993) in the context of participatory art. ABCD empowers communities to 'assemble their strengths into new combinations, new structures of opportunity, new sources of income and control, and new possibilities for production' (McKnight and Kretzmann).

It linked this framework to notions set out in Nabeel Hamdi's *Small Change: About the Art of Practice and the Limits of Planning in Cities* (2004) (v). The project enlists the notion of piloting, and incremental development to stage initially small-scale interventions, in order to meaningfully engage stakeholders in planning for and delivering change. Hamdi advocates for an approach to developmental design, which is the opposite of large-scale projects being imposed on communities. His work supports using what is already present to augment existing structures, giving agency to those involved in the process and making lasting change. The project has been of interest to those in urban design, architecture, urban and social studies, as well as artists and designers.

The methods employed take the project from being artist-led, as it gets established, through to community-led once established.



The Portland Inn *Raising The Roof*, 2018
Final celebration event as part of the ACE funded programme.

Research Process

The research began when Francis, commissioned by The British Ceramics Biennial in 2015, undertook *Community Maker* as a 3-year commitment with funding from the Paul Hamlyn foundation. Initially the research aimed to use arts practice to create a special community ceramic and to engage local stakeholders in discussions about the Portland Street area's needs and resources.

The project developed creative participatory consultation techniques to ensure that the making process itself (being productive), leading to immediate physical change in material terms, supported and strengthened local relationships and engagement.

These art sessions created space for conversations with residents which then informed the direction of the research, and which helped to define both the project's research remit and the practical interventions which would be used to test findings.



Community Maker Backstamp, 2015

Project logo and backstamp for intended community ceramic, commissioned by British Ceramics Biennial, 2015.

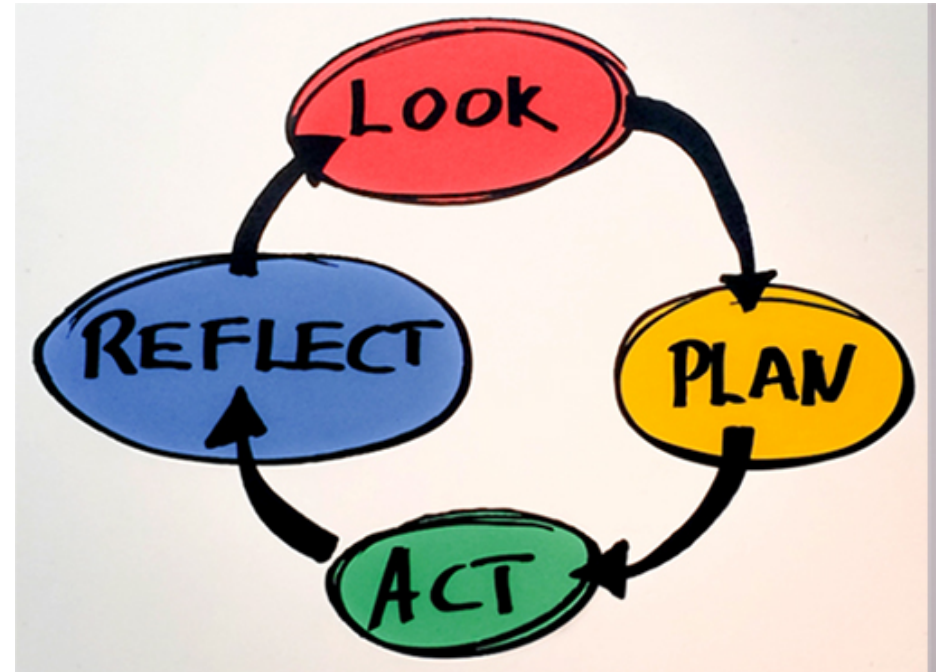
Research Process

Francis adapted the Action Research Process first tested via *The Spode Rose Garden* project (2013-ongoing) (eprints.staffs.ac.uk/lists/59), to ensure that local stakeholders were engaged in the research project from the outset.

The Process, as set out in relation to social change theory by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) describes Action Research as

'a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of those practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out.' (vii)

This process enlists the notions of piloting and incremental development to then stage initially small-scale interventions to assemble the resources and stakeholders to create a plan for change based on local need. It enacts the plan collaboratively, seeks to reflect on the successes and any learnings from the outcome, before then beginning the process again.



Action Research Process Diagram.

First presented as part of the Small Worlds exhibition, 2015, as part of The Spode Rose Garden Project, 2013 – Current.

Research Process

The initial stages of the project to involve the community in looking at the area and identifying 'what works' locally (*i.e.*, resources and assets) and what 'needed work' (*i.e.*, areas to prioritise for focused change and development) involved testing creative participatory consultation techniques to ensure that the arts sessions enabled local relationships and engagement to be formed around the questions raised by the project. The use of clay was identified as useful, due to the immediacy of the transformation it enables. This in itself, was recognised as being hugely beneficial, in an area where a lot of change had been promised, but the collapse of previous development plans had left the community feeling disenfranchised.

Initial workshops created space for conversation with residents and service providers which informed the direction of the research, and helped to define the research remit of the project, and the practical interventions which would be used to test findings.



Community Maker, Mapping Exercise, 2015

Left: First workshop – mapping what works and what needs work on clay map of the area.

Middle: Fired ceramic tiles made by workshop participants, showing what works and what needs work in the area.

Right: temporary workshop space.

Research Process

The original BCB project plan for *Community Maker* involved celebrating a local custom of hosting community activity around a 'Bring A Plate' or 'Pot Luck' meal, where each community member would bring a plate of food from their homes, together creating a buffet meal to share.

The intended final project outcome was to create a celebratory community ceramic that could be kept in people's homes and brought out for community occasions, connecting with and celebrating the local buffet ritual.

The process, then, involved employing the transformative nature of clay as a material to talk about the difficult experiences of the community and to then look ahead to the future and plan for positive change. The workshops and conversations would also generate imagery with the community, which would be used on the celebratory ceramicware.

By the end of year one, although the notion of a Community Ceramic was still central to the project, the research had also uncovered greater need in the area. This related to the need to develop community infrastructure and to create activity locally which would tackle some of the significant issues facing the community in terms of lack of physical spaces to meet, high levels of crime and anti-social behavior, and high levels of mental health vulnerability.



Community Maker Year One, 2015

Top: Front of flyer delivered to 500 homes in the area.

Bottom: Initial Workshops in year one of the project included, community walkabout events with residents and service providers to physically locate resources and problems in the area.

Research Process



The *Community Maker* project concluded in 2017 with the intended outcome of a community ceramic. This was realised in prototype form, a table setting that was displayed at BCB 2017, and as a fully-developed ceramic mug product which included the imagery generated with the community. BCB 2017 hosted a celebratory meal for community members. This stage marks a transition as the research element had started to move from the development of a community ceramic to the development of new community infrastructure.

Community Maker at The British Ceramics Biennial, 2017.

The end point of the Community Maker project, commissioned by British Ceramics Biennial, **Left:** Table setting of community produced prototype wares. **Middle:** ceramic cakes, **Right:** Community Maker ceramic product on sale at British Ceramics Biennial, 2017.

Research Process

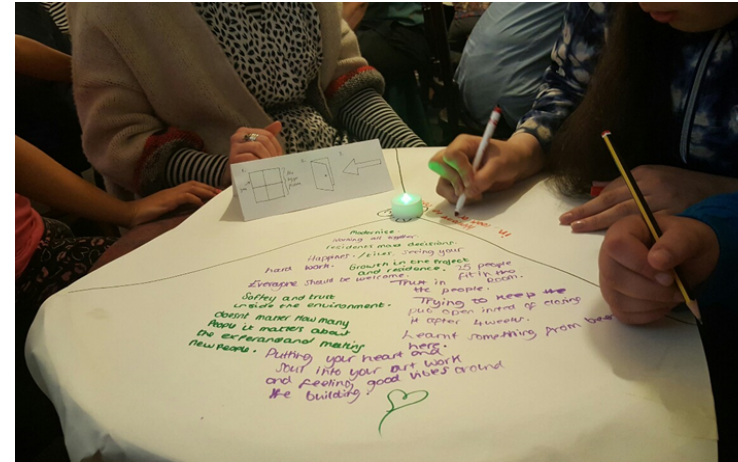
Sharing the findings of *Community Maker* year one with Stoke-on-Trent City Council led the Council to offer the boarded-up Portland Inn building for a 4-week arts programme to test the need for a community space.

Francis began a creative collaboration with Davies, who had also been working in the area on a touring art project, which brought a temporary space to Stoke-on-Trent and 2 other cities. *The Portland Inn Development Project* (a 4-week, Arts Council funded programme of works) tested one of the research's most significant findings, an articulated need by the community for a community space.

The Portland Inn Project then began from *Community Maker*. It is a collaborative creative arts project which draws on and critiques theory from Richard Florida (*The Rise of the Creative Class*, 2002) and others regarding the role of artists in regenerating areas. *Portland* extends this theory by how artists can plan long-term collaborations with communities – considering what happens when artists work where they live and adopt an asset-based approach to artist-led community development. *Portland* is designed to explore how art projects can raise community aspirations through collaborative infrastructure development.

The Portland Inn Development Project, 2016.

Top Left and Right: World Café Event to involve the community in a series of key questions to inform the writing of a business plan.



Research Process

The 4-week programme involved 53 different activities, workshops and events, which physically tested how the building could be used, with a variety of approaches. It involved the community in answering questions and raising issues to then inform the writing of a business plan that would make the case for the council to transfer the building into community ownership.

The business plan was submitted to Stoke City Council in December 2016. In May 2018, the building's transfer to community ownership was agreed at Stoke City Council Cabinet Meeting.



The Portland Inn Development Project, 2016.
Final Celebration Event.

Research Process

The Portland Inn Project focused on addressing the priorities identified by the community and involved an on-going programme of artist-led interventions that engage and empower community members in planning for and developing community assets. When the asset transfer of the pub building was agreed at Cabinet (2018), Francis and Davies began to test how a process of co-building with the community could work. In an Arts Council funded programme of activity titled 'Raising the Roof', they partnered with Baxendale Architects to build a temporary structure based on the dimensions of the workshop room in the pub building.

As well as delivering a focused skills development programme, 'Raising the Roof' explored how *The Portland Inn Project* can support the raising of aspirations in local people. It involved the community in first building a temporary community space, from which to run an active community programme, and in, running The Portland Architecture School from the space. In this 'School' the community, led by Davies, Francis, and architect Godson Egbo, would redesign the Portland Inn building.



Raising The Roof, 2018.

Left, Community Co-Build activity, creating the temporary structure. Right: The Portland Architecture School with Godson Egbo.

Research Process

Raising The Roof aimed to establish a strong working group of local stakeholders to work together on locating the resources to develop the pub building, and to involve local people in skills development work to take over the project in the long term. Skills include community development, community organising, and ceramics production.

It tested aspects identified as development needs for the new building, via a programme of activities and workshops. For example, *Raising the Roof* tested methods for ceramics skills development by including a ceramics product development stand. This responded to the Business Plan's identified need to create a ceramics workshop. This workshop will create the fixtures and fittings for the building, and it will provide a sustainable income by supporting local people to learn ceramic skills in order to be able to offer workshops and the selling of wares. This income will also enable the programme of skills development to continue longer term.



Raising The Roof Programme, 2018.

Research Process



The 'Raising The Roof' temporary structure designed by Baxendale Architects, and co-built with the Portland Street community, was shortlisted for the RIBA MacEwen Award, which recognises architecture undertaken for the common good.

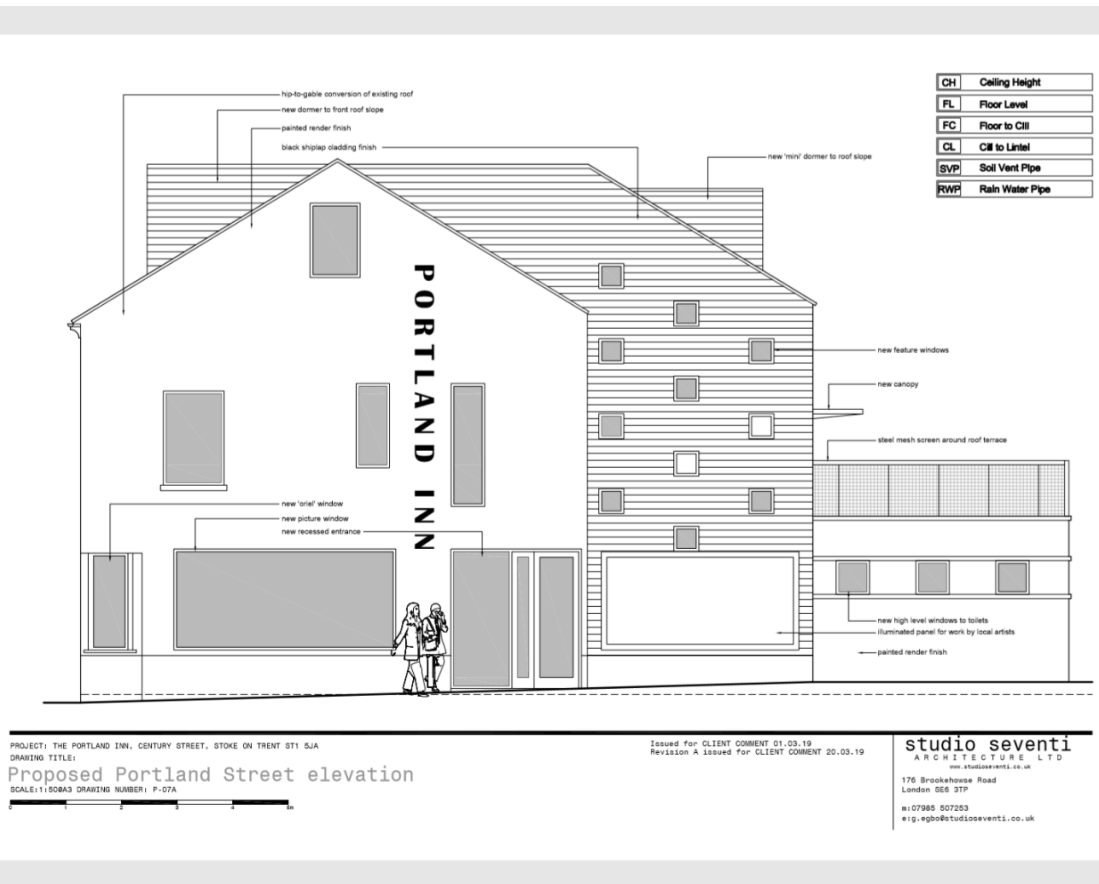
An important aspect of the project has been around changing the rhetoric of Portland Street. Previously, news stories about the area focused on the collapsed regeneration scheme, the anti-social behaviour and drug problems in the area, and the £1 home scheme. An aim of *The Portland Inn Project* has been to involve the community in representing themselves in local and national media, telling a more positive story about community action and resilience.

Raising The Roof Architectural Structure on the Front Cover of The RIBA Journal, Feb. 2019.

Research Process

The findings from *Raising The Roof* led to the development of architectural plans for the pub building with Egbo.

The development plans were submitted to Stoke City Council Planning Office in March 2020, and after some minor revisions, planning permission was granted in December 2020. As of January 2021, Davies and Francis are in the process of fund raising for the building development. They have secured £163,000 from 3 funding sources as they work toward the estimated £600,000 needed.



The Portland Inn Project Architectural Plan, 2019.

Plans developed from the findings of The Portland Architecture School with Godson Egbo of Studio Seventi Architecture Ltd.

Research Process

At the end of 2018, *The Portland Inn Project* applied to be a part of the Creative Civic Change (CCC) programme, a new approach to funding using arts and creativity to make positive local change, CCC is an experimental funding programme delivered by the Local Trust, the National Lottery Community Fund, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Being selected to be part of the proposal process provided £10,000 for a 3-month research and consultation activity (Jan 2019 – March 2019) to involve local people in setting priorities and designing a proposal for a 3-year programme which would use a potential £200,000 if successful, to deliver a programme using the flexible, long-term funding, in-area mentoring and a substantial peer learning programme in 15 communities across England.



CCC proposal process, community consultation event sharing the research findings, March 2019.

Research Process

As part of the CCC proposal process, 4 area priorities were identified for the £200,000 funding to address over 3 years. Priorities included strengthening the organisation, securing a temporary space to host community activity, developing new skills with and for the community to ensure the project's long term sustainability, and having a focus around safety and security, in order to address local issues such as crime and anti-social behaviour.

As part of the proposal process a video showing the geographical context of the area was created, which aimed to demonstrate the environmental factors impacting on the community locally, as well as a Priorities poster, which would quickly communicate to the community and the funder the identified priorities arising from the research and consultation period.

In April 2019 the CCC funding was confirmed, enabling *The Portland Inn Project* to employ 4 members of staff, deliver a temporary community building to work from, and begin to run a regular programme of community activity – including a youth club, monthly community social events, and a skills development programme.

The Portland Inn Project Priorities Poster, 2019.
Creative Civic Change Programme Application.



Research Process

Strengthening *The Portland Inn Project* as an organisation has included employing 4 members of staff and setting up a Community Decision Making Panel. This Panel enables ongoing priorities to be set, programmes to be developed collaboratively with the community and for the community to continue to be involved in developing local infrastructure. The Community Decision Making Panel is made up of a changing group of (majority) residents as well as local service providers, including representatives from the City Council, local policing team and community organisations. Building on the processes employed in the *Community Maker* project, bi-monthly meetings take the form of Community Meals, recognising that sharing food together can lead to collaboration and an increased sense of community.



The Portland Inn Project Community Decision Making Panel meal meetings, 2019.

Research Process

The Portland Inn Project has built on community priority to develop skills by providing artist-led ceramics skills workshops. This area of programme is known as *The Clay End* (a local term for the section of the ceramics factory where the wet and dirty clay based ceramics processes take place). In 2019 it was developed through a collaboration with BCB as part of their *Cultural Icons* project. These sessions trained community members in hand building techniques, and in press moulding as part of an exhibition programme looking at the historic Staffordshire Flatback (viii). *The Portland Inn Project* extended this by supporting community members to learn mould making skills, hosting a sprig mould workshop on the street, and working with master mould maker, Ed Bentley, to create 3 portland pigeon flatbacks. These decorative ceramics were displayed alongside the *Cultural Icons* exhibition at the BCB Festival Exhibition, 2019.



Research Process

The skills development programme is prioritised around local concerns and issues, for example: The children at The Portland Youth Club expressed concern about local environmental and crime issues, *i.e.*, fly-tipping, drug dealing and dog mess. A programme of skills development to draw attention to and tackle these issues involved the commissioning of a series of workshops in music and video. The result was a music video, written, directed and performed by the children, which was released in January 2020. Part of the workshop programme with the young people involved discussing how a community can represent themselves, and the importance of being in charge of the messages coming out of a community area.



Portland Street, Music Video by Portland Street Youth Club.

The Portland Street Music video was created via skills development workshops as part of the youth club programme and premiered online January 2020.

Research Process

In response to very low employment figures locally, and low levels of educational attainment a priority for *The Portland Inn Project* has been to research alternative community spaces for learning.

To test the remit of the project as an alternative education provider, funding was secured from the EU Social Fund to pilot a 6-month training programme. The training offer:

'The Portland Inn Project Fellowship is an alternative education and training programme, aimed at individuals not currently in work, education or training, who would like to gain creative skills, learn about social and community arts and expand creative employability skills.'

The Portland Fellowship supported 3 fellows to develop new skills and products, with the aim to launch these products alongside the first *Portland Inn Project* product (The Portland Pigeon) at The Heywood Ceramics Fair 2020. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 the programme was not completed fully. However, one of the fellows completed the required programme and launched a brand new product, The Portland Spoon, online in October 2020.



Top: Anna Francis leads ceramic workshop for The Portland Fellowship, 2019.

Bottom: The Portland Spoon, Blythe Taylor, 2020

Product developed by participant in The Portland Inn Project Fellowship.

Research Process

The CCC community consultation identified developing a temporary activity space as a community priority. *The Portland Inn Project* arranged for a shipping container to be delivered in August 2019. The container was adapted as part of the summer activity programme, and was in use as a community venue by September 2019.



Delivery and Adaptation of Shipping Container, August 2019.
As part of the Creative Civic Change Programme.

Research Process

Forming an important part of the long-term sustainability plan for the research project, the social enterprise ceramics aspect of the project was tested via *The Portland Pigeon – Social Enterprise Launch*, 2020. Originally planned to be launched at The Heywood Gallery Ceramics Fair 2020, which was cancelled due to the Global Pandemic, the launch was staged online via an Instagram Live Channel, which appropriated the language and style of TV shopping channels. 33 ceramic pigeons went on sale with an average price of £115 each, and sold out in 2 hours. A countdown to the launch #pigeondrop built momentum over the week before the sale and during the Live Launch

The Portland Pigeon demonstrates the approach to product design which the social enterprise will take, where each product idea will be in response to a local need and with a practical application locally. The product will be developed with the community (as was the case here) but will have a secondary commercial value in order to create an important funding stream longer term.

Due to a need to fix the roof of the Portland Inn building, it was identified that a first and urgent product for the project would be a roof tile. In order to make the ridge tile commercially interesting, it was decided to make this tile a decorative product. Informed by Donna Haraway's text on pigeons in *Staying with the Trouble*, where the pigeon is recognised as being creatures with a contested history and place in the world. The pigeon, also being recognised as a traditional pet in areas like the Portland Street Area, was chosen as a fitting motif for the project and the area.



#PIGEONDROP live product launch, 30 October 2020.
Top and above: The Portland Pigeon product, Herbie.

Research Process

'Building natural cultural economies and lives for thousands of years, these critters are also infamous for ecological damage and upheaval. They are treasured kin and despised pests, subject of rescue and of invective, bearers of rights...companions in work and play and carriers of disease, contested subjects and objects of 'modern progress' and 'backward tradition.' (ix)

The Portland Pigeon was prototyped with the Community of Portland Street, via ceramics workshops between 2018 and 2020, before two final pigeon designs were finalised in 2020, and moulds made to then produce multiple products. Surface pattern and texture using ceramic slips, surface decoration techniques such as sgraffito were also tested with the community, before the 33 pigeons were made and put on sale.

The making process creates a neutral space which enables a more natural conversation to take place which is productive. The research has revealed that taking the community through a design process is beneficial, in that the iterative nature of the development of a product acts as a physical demonstration of how community development is also iterative. Initial change can be seen, but if that is then reflected on and refined and then developed further, a more nuanced and relevant development can be achieved, much like the design process itself. Making that visible for the community has been hugely useful for taking the community through the developments associated with the project.



#PIGEONDROP live product launch, 30 October 2020.
Above: Instagram Live Post at #PIGEONDROP online event, 2020.

Research Process

Francis and Davies co-designed workshops to use *The Portland Inn Project* as a model to facilitate discussion of the challenges facing social artists. 3 events involving a total of 261 social arts practitioners took place in 2018 and 2019. This included leading a lab at the Social Art Summit in Sheffield (November 2018); leading a workshop at the Social Art Assembly at Tate Modern (April 2019); and leading a weekend-long artists' retreat commissioned by the ceramics organisation Collective Matter (September 2019).

Questions were framed such as 'What are the guiding principles for you in working in social contexts, where are the absolute lines in the sand?', which then produced thematic discussion.

The discussions led to the co-production of a 'Rules of Engagement' resource targeted at social arts practitioners.

A total of 60 social artists contributed to the development of the resource, via the Lab and a targeted online consultation. The resulting set of guidelines were commissioned and distributed by The Artists Information Company, emailed to 25,000 members.

The guide is now available as a permanent artist resource on the A-N website.



Rules of Engagement Workshop, Social Art Summit, November 2018.

Notes

- (i) Parliament.uk. (2013). [online] Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05953/SN05953.pdf>
- (ii) CHAD Research. (2020). *Health Inequalities - CHAD Research*. [online] Available at: <https://www.chadresearch.co.uk/health-inequalities/>.
- (iii) local.communityinsight.org. (n.d.). *Local Insight*. [online] Available at: <https://local.communityinsight.org/>.
- (iv) Kretzmann, J.P. and McKnight, J.L. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: a path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets*. Sheridan Road: Asset-Based Community Development Institute.
- (v) Nabeel Hamdi (2004). *Small change: about the art of practice and the limits of planning in cities*. London ; Sterling, Va.: Earthscan.
- (vi) *Stoke-on-Trent £1 houses: Hundreds express buying interest*. (2013). BBC News. [online] 23 Apr. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-stoke-staffordshire-22247663>
- (vii) Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1988). *The action research planner* (3rd ed.). Geelong: Deakin University.
- (viii) British Ceramics Biennial. (n.d.). *Cultural Icons*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britishceramicsbiennial.com/event/cultural-icons/>
- (ix) Haraway, D. (2016). *Staying With The Trouble : Making Kin In The Chthulucene*. Durham (N.C.) ; London: Duke University Press.

Research Insights

The research has demonstrated:

- The use of creative intervention as a tool to secure sustainable buy-in from partners and stakeholders from the project outset, demonstrating how creativity can lead to civic engagement and community development in an area of multiple deprivation.
- The use of co-production as a method to promote and improve social cohesion, where local issues such as social isolation are addressed and prioritised.
- That emphasising new skills development through co-production enables processes of making, planning, debating through creative engagement to contribute to positive change in health and well-being and the professional development of individuals.
- Through the creative co-production process, gaps in provision and unmet needs are identified by the artist which leads them to take on a longer-term community leadership role.
- Creative co-production processes can change community perceptions through a collective rethinking of overlooked city resources and abandoned sites which go beyond economics to promote social and ecological values.



The Portland Inn Project Fellowship Poster (2019)

A poster to advertise the call for individuals to take part in a dedicated skills development fellowship, focusing on the development of ceramic making skills and community organizing.

Documentation of Outputs



Creative Civic Change Development Plan, 2019

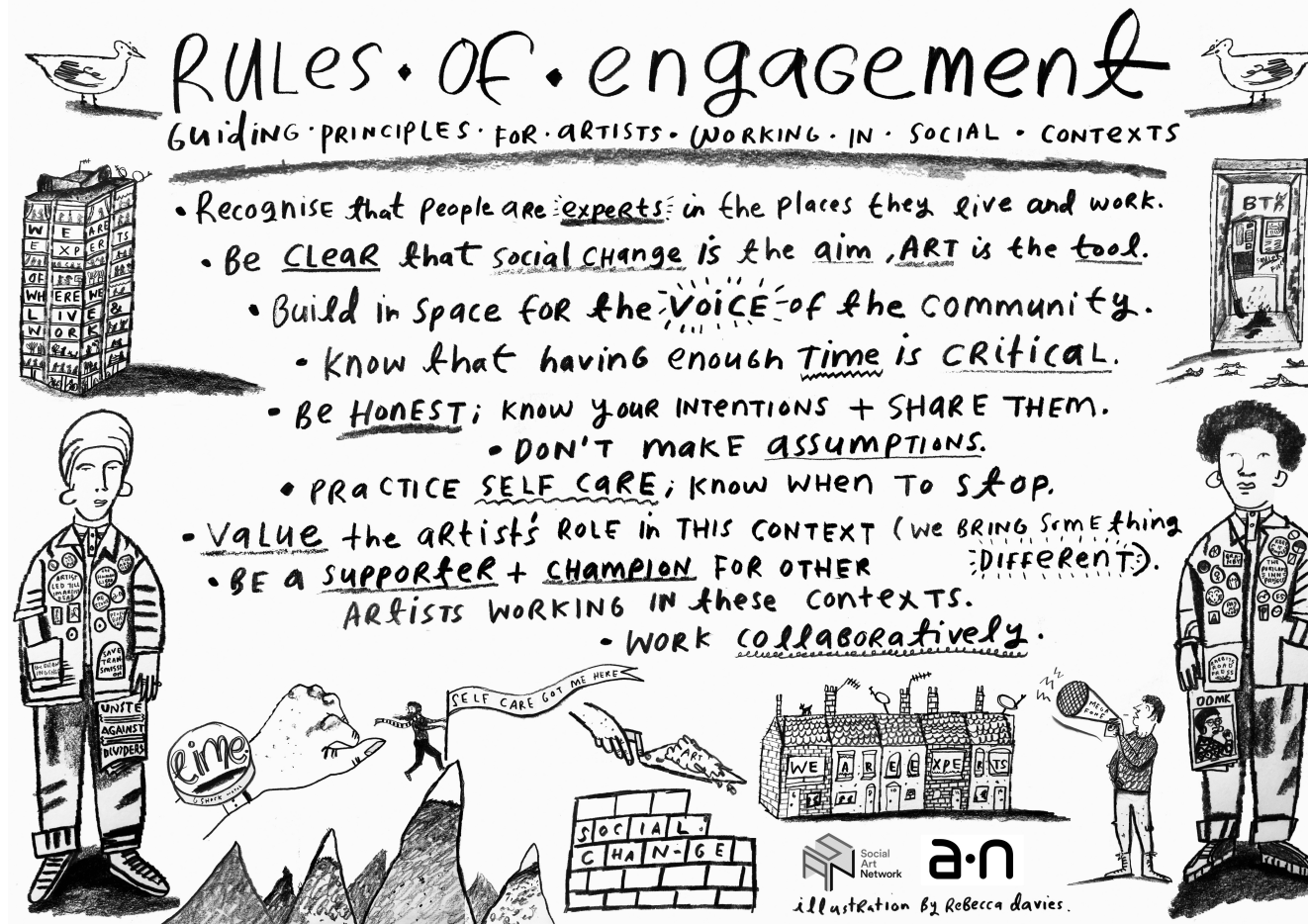
Documentation includes proposal for 3-year programme, community priorities poster, video made as part of application and posters advertising community consultation events. <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5710/>

Documentation of Outputs



Pigeon Flatback, British Ceramics Biennial Festival 2019.

Works created by the Portland Street Community as part of skills development programme, on display at The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, UK.



Rules of Engagement: Ten guiding principles for artists working in social contexts.

Outcome of consultation workshop and questionnaire undertaken with social artists, commissioned by a-n
The Artists Information Company (2019). <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5774/>

Dissemination: Exhibitions

British Ceramics Biennial 2015, Community Maker, Spode Factory, Stoke-on-Trent, UK. Exhibition of development of wares, and Community Meal. <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/3000/>

British Ceramics Biennial 2017, Community Maker, Spode Factory, Stoke-on-Trent, UK. Exhibition of finished wares, and Community Meal. <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5554/>

The Portland Inn Development Project, Portland Inn, Stoke-on-Trent, UK. 2016. **FRANCIS, Anna** and **DAVIES, Rebecca.**
<https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5709/>

The Portland Inn Project: Raising the Roof, Portland Street, Stoke-on-Trent, UK. 2018. **FRANCIS, Anna** and **DAVIES, Rebecca.**
<https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5566/>

The Portland Inn Project Exhibition at AirSpace Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, UK. **FRANCIS, Anna** and **DAVIES, Rebecca.** 2018
<https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5574/>

The Portland Pigeon at Manchester Contemporary Art Fair, Manchester, UK. 2018. **FRANCIS, Anna** and **Davies, Rebecca.**
<https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5575/>

Dissemination: Conferences, Symposia and Workshops

Nordic Geographers Meeting 2015, conference presentation on Brownfield Ikebana, Tallinn, Estonia, 2015. <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5514/>

The Art of Dwelling, invited speaker at IXIA and In Certain Places conference on Public Art Now, Birmingham, 2015. <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5513/>

The AHRC Commons: Common Ground - Artist Soup Kitchen: Community Maker. 21st June 2016, York University. <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5529/>

The Power in People: Assembly Margate - Community Maker. In: A-N Assembly: 4th and 5th May 2017, Margate, England. <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5531/>

Ceramics and Its Dimensions Congress 'Can Ceramics Make a Difference? - Community Maker and The Portland Inn Project. 5 - 6 October 2017, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, England. <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5532/>



The Art of Dwelling Walk.

Led by Anna Francis at Ixia and In Certain Places conference. (2015)

Dissemination: Conferences, Symposia and Workshops

Derby Visual Arts Summit, Keynote, *The Artist's Voice: Stories of Transformation and Change*. 22nd January 2018, Deda, Derby.
<https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5533/>

A-N Assembly: Birmingham -Opportunities and challenges in a redeveloping city. Friday 15th June, 2018. Eastside Projects, Birmingham.
<https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5534/>

Prospecting: new directions and territories for artists' practice - *Interventions for Social Change*. 1st November 2018, University Centre Somerset, Taunton.
<https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5535/>

Social Art Summit - *Representing the Change: Rules of Engagement*. 1st and 2nd November, 2018, Locations around Sheffield. <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5536/>

The Future of Craft Talks in Collaboration with Design-Nation and Future Icons - *How has the role of craft in communities transformed experiences of daily life?* 10th May, 2019., Oxo Tower Wharf, London.
<https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5682/>



a-n

**Assembly Birmingham:
Friday 15 June 2018**

**Eastside Projects, 86 Heath Mill Lane,
Birmingham, B9 4AR**

The second a-n Assembly event for 2018 will take place at Eastside Projects in Birmingham, an artist-led gallery space established in 2008. Working in collaboration with artist and curator Antonio Roberts, Assembly Birmingham will address the increasing amount of development taking place across the city and the Midlands as a whole, exploring both the opportunities and the challenges this presents for the visual arts community in the region.

In 2017 Arts Council England invested £90 million in Birmingham-based National Portfolio Organisations, while the government's multi-billion-pound investment in high-speed railway HS2, which is due to open in December 2026, will reshape the city's landscape. Numerous artist-led galleries and commercial creative industries, including Eastside Projects, have established a presence in the Digbeth area of Birmingham in recent years, taking advantage of low rents, large spaces and close proximity to the city centre. While an ongoing redevelopment scheme for Digbeth and the wider city reflects the city's ambition to grow and regenerate, what impact will these changes have for artist residents?

Through a mix of presentations, discussions, artist film and a specially commissioned soundwalk through Digbeth, Assembly Birmingham will explore these competing tensions, reflecting on the opportunities artists have already built for themselves, and consider what investment and change could mean in the future.

**For more info and to book visit:
a-n.co.uk/assembly/birmingham**

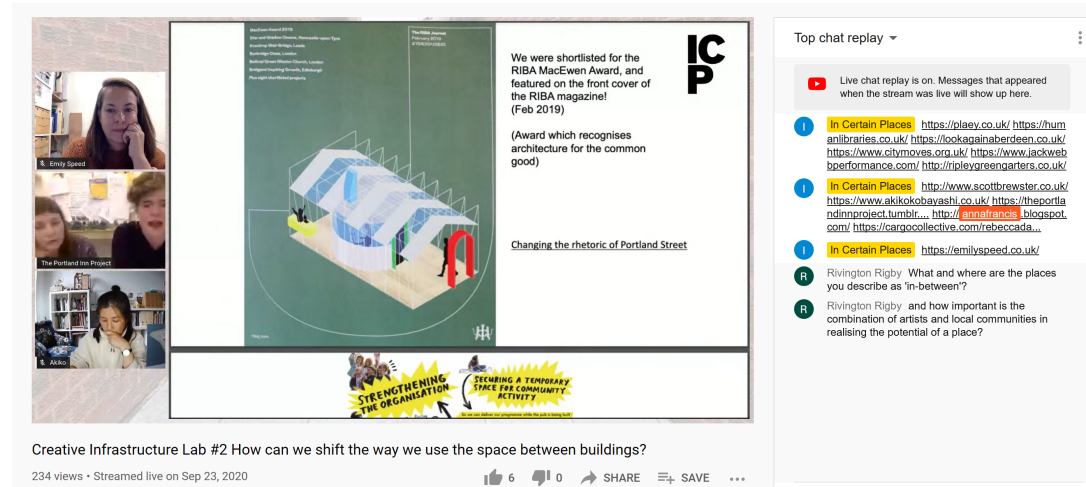
Assembly Birmingham Pamphlet, 2018.

Dissemination: Conferences, Symposia and Workshops

The Guardian Live Event: What's next for Stoke-on-Trent? 19th September, 2018. Mitchell Memorial Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent.
<https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5708/>

A-N Assembly: Stoke 2019 November 23rd 2019., AirSpace Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent. Programme for artist development meeting curated by Anna Francis and Rebecca Davies of *The Portland Inn Project*.
<https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6570/>

Creative Infrastructure Lab #2 How can we shift the way we use the space between buildings? – In Certain Places, online talks series. With Emily Speed, Akiko Kobayashi, Anna Francis and Rebecca Davies. 2020. <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6753>



Live Stream of Creative Infrastructure Lab #2,
In Certain Places, 2020.

Dissemination: Related Publications by the Researcher

FRANCIS, Anna (2017) *Artwashing gentrification is a problem – but vilifying the artists involved is not the answer*. The Conversation. ISSN 2044-5032 <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5703/>

FRANCIS, Anna (2019) *Presenting two sides of a social arts project*. In: Research Paper: Social Art Summit. a-n The Artists Information Company., pp. 29-30. ISBN 978-1-907529-22-1 <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5773/>

DAVIES, Rebecca and **FRANCIS, Anna** (2020) *Doing it for themselves*. RIAS Quarterly, 43. pp. 46-48. ISSN 2044-1851 <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6627/>



RIAS Quarterly Link:

<https://media.rias.org.uk/files/2020/10/29/12CC0906-68DF-6F9E-1EC1-B355A097F088.pdf>

Dissemination: Related Publications by the Researcher

FRANCIS, Anna, and DAVIES, Rebecca (2020) *Towards Our New Architecture: A Séance in One Act*. Estate Publications: L-13
<http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6567/>

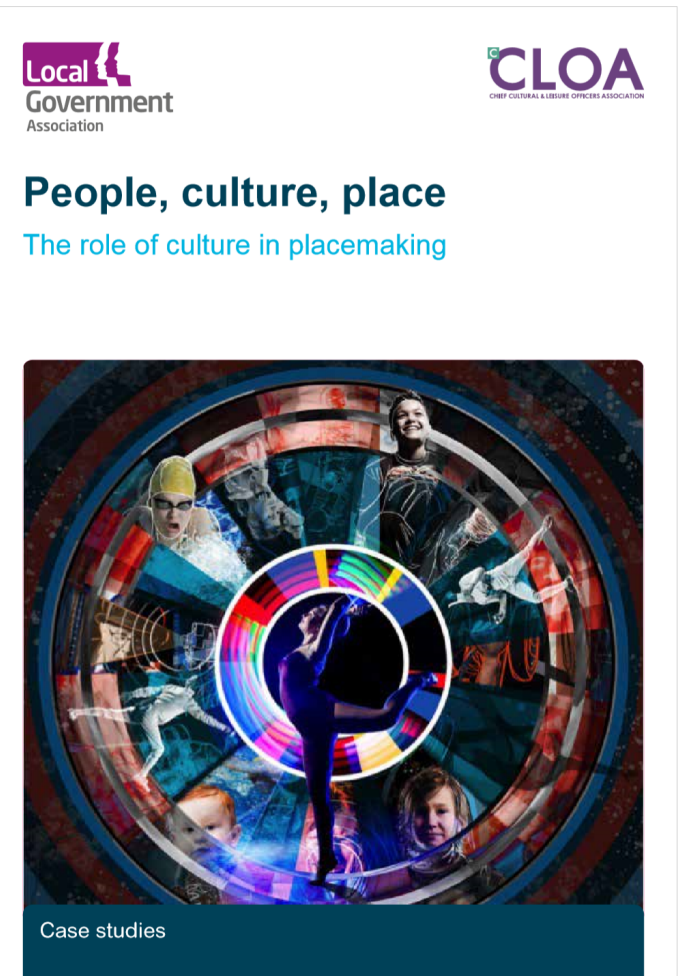
Essay commissioned by L-13 Light Industrial Workshop and disseminated to all visitors to Jimmy Cauty's MdZ Estate Tour: Stoke-on-Trent, 2020.



<https://l-13.org/category/jimmy-cauty/mdzestatetour/>

Dissemination: Related Publications by Others: Local Government Association

The *Community Maker* project was one of 10 case studies which formed the Local Government Association publication *People, culture, place: The role of culture in placemaking*, (2017). Within the publication, key learning points were drawn out from the research to act as pointers for councils wishing to use creative methods to make positive change for their areas.



<https://www.local.gov.uk/people-culture-place-role-culture-placemaking>

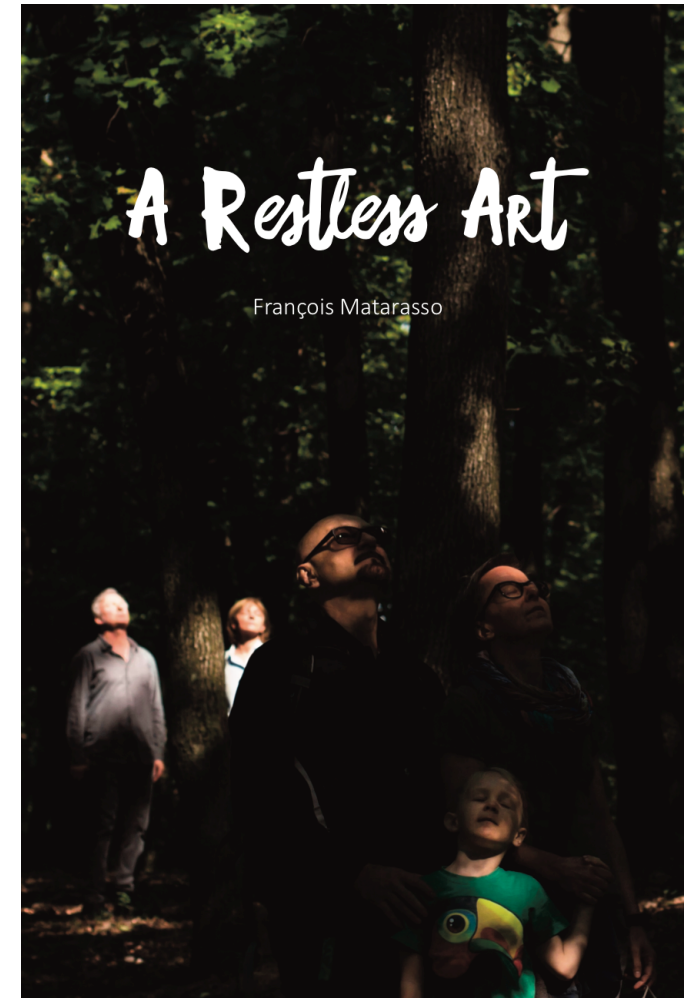
Dissemination: Related Publications by Others: Francois Matarasso

In his ongoing online blog documenting and critiquing participatory art, *A Restless Art: How Participation Won and Why it Matters*, artist and theorist François Matarasso includes a full case study of Community Maker, The Portland Inn Project and other projects by Francis that researches culture and regeneration.

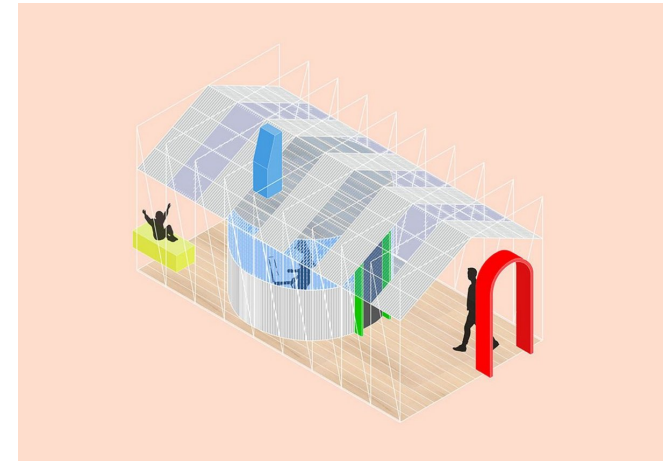
A Restless Art. (2018). *The Portland Inn Project*. [online] Available at: <https://arestlessart.com/case-studies/the-portland-inn-project/>

A shorter version case study of the project appears in his book of the same name:

François Matarasso (2019). *A Restless Art: How participation won, and why it matters*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, UK Branch.



Dissemination: Related Publications by Others: RIBA JOURNAL



The *Portland Inn Project's Raising The Roof* programme structure was featured on the front cover of the February 2019 edition of RIBA Journal: February 2019, London, UK: RIBA. The publication includes an article that discusses *The Portland Inn Project's* motivations, methodologies, and outcomes.

<https://www.ribaj.com/macewen/macewen-award-2019-shortlist-baxendale-studio-raising-the-roof-community-space-stoke-on-trent-pop-up>

Dissemination: Related Publications by Others: Arts Council England

In the online article '*Artists turn redundant Stoke-on-Trent pub into a vibrant community hub*', the Arts Council's coverage of *The Portland Inn Project* detailing the Project's aims and documents the community events and activities.



www.artscouncil.org.uk. (n.d.). *Artists turn redundant Stoke-on-Trent pub into a vibrant community hub* | Arts Council England.
[online] Available at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/news/artists-turn-redundant-stoke-trent-pub-vibrant-community-hub>

Dissemination: Related Publications by Others: The Guardian

The Guardian documentary series, *Made in Stoke-on-Trent*, by John Domokos (2018) documents the project and the area:

'Ravaged by years of cuts, the Portland street estate started selling homes for just £1. But what started as a desperate bid to turn a community around soon became something very different.'



Domokos, J. and Rinvolutri, B. (n.d.). *Made in Stoke-on-Trent – Episode 2: £1 for a House*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/ng-interactive/2018/jan/08/made-in-stoke-on-trent-episode-2-1-for-a-house>

Dissemination: Related Publications by Others: BBC

Video created as part of **We Are Stoke-on-Trent** - a BBC project with the people of the city of Stoke 'to tell the stories that matter to them.'

Video journalist: Catherine Mackie

'For many years the area around Portland Street in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, was synonymous with crime and drugs.

But mothers who live in the area and artists who have moved there have joined forces to change its image.'



The mums and artists reclaiming a city's streets. (n.d.). *BBC News*. [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-stoke-staffordshire-49776039>

Dissemination: Related publications by Others: BBC Radio and The British Library

Radio Programme created for The Listening Project, a BBC Radio 4 and The British Library partnership.

The Listening Project is an audio archive of conversations recorded by the BBC. People are invited to share an intimate conversation with a close friend or relative, to be recorded and broadcast (in edited form) by the BBC and curated and archived in full by the British Library.

'Friends on how working towards a better community on their council estate has given them a new sense of hope for the area.. Fi Glover presents another conversation in a series that proves it's surprising what you hear when you listen.'



BBC. (2018). Sarah and Anna – Saving the Estate. [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0000z6k>