

Collective Matter: The Potteries Thinkbelt for the Future at Contemporary Sculpture Fulmer, Slough

07 – 08 Sept. 2019.



In 2019 The Portland Inn Project in Stoke on Trent, hosted a two day gathering of learning, socialising and debate. Through clay workshops, campouts and discussion, the group investigated the power of art for social change and brought the story of the community of Portland Street to a national audience.

'...The Thinkbelt was an industrial undertaking... its remit included working with regional industries as research and design centres, as well as offering re-training in new industries for local residents whose work in the pits and potteries had disappeared'.... a site of learning premised on patterns of mobility, at individual, collective and even infrastructural scales. This mobility, embedded within the physical buildings themselves, spoke to a wider understanding of the word in debates about meritocracy and the opening out of higher education to a part of the population hitherto under-represented.'

- The Potteries Thinkbelt - an idea and architectural plan drawn up by Cedric Price, was first published 1966.

The weekend retreat led by Anna Francis and Rebecca Davies invited social arts practitioners to come together for a retreat at Contemporary Sculpture Fulmer, Slough, hosted by Collective Matter, to use the framework of Cedric Price's Potteries Thinkbelt, to explore what support looks like for us, via a series of hands on workshops, discussions and explorations.

From the Collective Matter website:

The Potting Shed is a permanent multi-functional artwork installed at sculpture park, Contemporary Sculpture Fulmer. It was designed by Collective Matter, in collaboration with furniture designer Geoffrey Hagger as a platform for experimentation and making. Programme 2019 investigated the value and models of contemporary of social practice through a series of interventions, events and workshops from three artists and arts organisations:

Working as an extension of their current social enterprise project, The Portland Inn Project in Stoke on Trent, Rebecca and Anna organised a two day gathering of learning, socialising and debate. Through clay workshops, campouts and discussion, they investigated the power of art for social change.

Video documentation here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIG6qm82J1k&list=TLGGBc7uypXrCAowMzA1MjAyMQ&t=422s>

Photographic documentation by Felicity Crawshaw:



