



**into
the
wild**

2015/16

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Leena Chauhan
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Into the Wild is a one-year professional development programme for fourteen selected artists who have completed BA degree courses in the last three years. The programme is run by Chisenhale Studios. Now in its second year, this unique, free initiative aims to support and inspire emerging artists by providing practical advice on how to survive and thrive in the real world, as well as offering opportunities for making and creative development.

With talks, workshops and mentoring from successful artists and key industry professionals, participants will be able to explore their practices and better understand the diversity of ways to succeed and flourish as an artist in London.

How to: get funding, network, promote yourself, write applications, work with galleries and curators, write statements, build audiences, work collectively, earn money, stay confident, find spaces, generate opportunities and be proactive.

The programme begins with an eight-week taught course that runs every Monday, including inspiring and informative talks by invited guest speakers and artists from Chisenhale Studios. Participants are matched with a relevant studio artist for individual one-to-one mentoring. The taught course is followed by a group-residency in Chisenhale's large Studio4 space, consolidating knowledge gained in the Monday sessions by giving participants the chance to make work, share ideas and host events. During this time, two emerging curators work with participants to plan shows and projects beyond the programme, by means of transition 'into the wild'.

Chisenhale Art Place occupies a unique position in London's East End art community, providing a distinctive platform for local and international artists and audiences. Founded in 1980 by artists determined to find their own premises, Chisenhale Art Place now houses three flourishing and distinct initiatives: Chisenhale Dance Space, Chisenhale Gallery and Chisenhale Studios. The studios provide affordable workspace to both established and emerging artists. Their work reflects the diversity of contemporary art practice and promotes a wider understanding of artistic practice and processes through open sharing events, projects and residencies.

This publication is a collection of individual responses written and designed by members of the ITW 2015-16.

Into the Wild is supported by Arts Council England and the artists at Chisenhale Studios.

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We'd all like to express our thanks to Chisenhale Studios for having us; the artists and speakers who gave us their time and knowledge; Louise and Andrea for co-ordinating the whole thing; and to Louise again for the many motivational speeches and flights of fancy. Be your own art world! Judo flip!

The Wildies 2015/16

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Andrea Davidson, Arts Manager of Chisenhale Art Place

Bar Yerushalmi, curator

Emma Warburton, curator

Alicia Paz, artist

Zoe Mendelson, artist

Tim Knowles, artist

Shezad Dawood, artist

Doug Fishbone, artist

Nadine Mahoney, artist

Amikam Toren, artist

Ingrid Kerma, artist

Kate Hardy, artist

Rebecca Glover, artist

Sarah Kate Wilson, artist

Richard Layzell, artist

Nikki Tomlinson, ArtsAdmin

Sally O'Reilly, artist / writer / critic

Vanessa Carlos, gallerist, Carlos/Ishikawa

Dunya Kalantery, curator, The Function Room

Judith Carlton, director, Cafe Gallery Projects

Belinda Holden, executive project manager, Futurecity

Justin Hammond, director of Art Catlin / The Catlin Prize

Michaela Crimmin, curator, Culture+Conflict / RCA tutor

Charlie Levine, curator, Camden Council and SLUICE art fair

THANKYOU

SPEAKERS

We begin this handbook at the start, as absolute beginners, for absolute beginners. This section is a list of all the advice we received for getting noticed, creating shows and making it happen.

JUST START DOING IT

The best way to make it happen is, oddly, to make it happen. This might sound like something your neighbour would put on Facebook, but hear it out. Go out and do the research, spend a week in a service station, spend a week collecting wood. Doing it creates energy. Nothing is as powerful. Nothing gets you noticed in the same way. Even if it's just a crappy thing for an afternoon, it's all in the right direction. It isn't going to happen if you sit in your bedroom thinking about it.

TELL PEOPLE

Tell people what you're doing. Doug Fishbone was emphatic about this, as it's worked for him before. Work out who might be interested, who has done similar stuff in the past, and approach them. Have a project description ready, so they know what you're talking about. Have an answer to that question: what are you working on? What do you want to do next?

COLD CALL

If you see a show happening that you think your work would fit in, email them, phone them, say you're doing work they might be interested in. Ask if there's a spot left. If there's a person you like, tell them why you like their work, and ask if they have time for a coffee.

HAVE YOUR PICKLES READY

Another Doug Fishbone thing, delivered in a New York accent, naturally, like a pizza commercial. "Have your pickles ready" means having everything lined up and ready to go: website, CV, artists statement, hi-res images, low-res images. So when someone says, 'that sounds interesting, send me some stuff,' you can just press: send. Seize the day motherfuckers!

BE A NICE PERSON

The other side of all this, is to have some bloody manners. If there's a hype curator at a show, or you bump into one of your heroes in Tesco Metro, behave like a decent human being.

Wait patiently to talk to them if they're talking to someone else. Ask them how they are. Explain what it is about their work you like. Then, and only then, can you can ask them to look at something, or for their email, or whatever. Be assertive, and confident, but not pushy. No-one likes Pushy McGee.

BE CAREFUL WHAT OPPORTUNITIES YOU TAKE

Do you want super-corporate white space? Do you want super-lo-fi burnt out garage? Do you want Clerkenwell Design Crowd and free cider spelt le cidre? Do you want supercool art crowd with bowl haircuts and cloaks? Make sure it fits.

GO FOR THE WILDEST IDEA NOW

Don't wait until everything has lined up perfectly before going for the big idea. Because that's not going to happen. Ideas go off like milk. Don't wait to propose the big thing you want to do. If the opportunity presents itself, do it now. Shezad Dawood said that.

IT'S UP TO YOU

Doug Fishbone said: no-one else cares what you're doing. Don't rely on anyone else to give you opportunities. *Either I'll do it myself, or it won't get done.*

BEWARE THE FACEBOOK PHILOSOPHER

All of this sounds obvious when it's written down. It also sounds easy. And it flirts dangerously close to a Nike slogan, or a hashtag to try to get you talking about KitKats on social media. But the key thing is: it's not for anyone else. It's not about soundbites, or looking good. This is to help you make the work you want to make, to think about it in the right way. Because:

THERE ARE AS MANY ARTIST PRACTICES AS THERE ARE ARTISTS

There is no right way. It doesn't matter what anyone else is doing. It doesn't matter what anyone else is saying. Everyone else is thinking about themselves. It's not a competition, everyone will die at some point, including you. Just get on with it and enjoy the making of it. Shanti, shanti, shanti.

SPACE to HOPE you make it

“So what are you up to now?” One graduate asked another. She curled her hair around a finger that whiffed of someone who was doing better- doing SOMETHING. That night he thought of her, as he burned toast into a smell that lingered in his cavities and the curtains. Whilst sleeping: his studio spreads into the near distance. Concrete is spitted with licks of paint, technicolour lustre, that he fills in his dreams like a children’s colouring-in book. Nostalgic for an environment he can’t remember: an infinite bliss of cheap, post-industrial space. He is rudely awoken into an ex-council flat with a toothbrush molting in his left hand, and an ‘I-should-be-so lucky’ pounding through a hangover of some one else’s out of date dreams If they ever dreamt them. Of course space is a much bigger issue now- Now we imagine we have less And with the camps and all...

Put fourteen art graduates in a room and ask them a question about how they are making it work, and you soon realize the question you’re really asking is ‘how are you making work?’ Or even – ‘ARE you making work?’ It’s in some ways less a question of ‘how to get a studio space’ and more how can we maintain hope.

For many of us, a studio is one wall of a one-bedroom flat, or better still shared house, seen at the end of a 12hr day, fitting awkwardly into a punishing pay-work schedule. Something you look at and feel guilty about not filling- WHITE WALL. But maybe it’s not the end – rather a tabula rasa, the beginnings of a new way of making things work. Because these past few weeks at Into The Wild have taught us there’s always a way if you keep looking, and that even if your ideal studio isn’t at your fingertips, a new way of working might be.

‘It is a question of learning hope. Its work does not renounce, it is in love with success rather than failure...The emotion of hope goes out to itself, makes people broad instead of confining them’
Ernst Bloch, The Principle of Hope, 1954-59

□ ADAPT LIKE AMOEBAS, HOPE LIKE A HUMAN, BE LIKE AN ARTIST...

I suppose the simplest option is to assess your situation and adapt rapidly. Don’t lust after the studios of the 1960’s, you could wither away dreaming of industrial warehouse-sized megaplexes of dereliction, or bijou yet despicably chic garrets in Chelsea and Paris. These days are gone. But, that doesn’t mean you can’t make work.

If you haven’t got a lot of space, figure out how your work can fit these new parameters, because if you are here in London, price comes at £17sqm for the lucky ones and even more for the rich. Keep ideas in a sketchbook ready for a time when you have space to make them; make maquettes, share resources and spaces with other artists; consider what space you do have access to – could you use parkland, industrial space, your lounge to temporarily realize a project? What about making work for zines, can ideas become verbalized, performances, text, WHATEVER, just don’t fix on what you haven’t got, try looking at what you DO have- that’s the bacon.

BURSTING THE LONDON BUBBLE- BANG IT

Scared of going anywhere North of the Watford Gap? Don't panic, it might be ok to get out for a while, London will still be here when you get back and there's always facebook, instagram, twitter- I mean who actually sees each other these days anyways, no one will forget you too quickly. I have friends who have moved up North and even to Spain who manage to see more stuff in London by visiting once a month than I do and I live here. They are hardly plunged into cultural obscurity, rather they return often like healthy glowing specimens who smile more, and pay less.

When I first graduated, despite being on countless waiting lists, despite all possible effort, I simply couldn't find a studio in London. I had shows coming up and my white-walls couldn't accommodate an excess of 500 pastel plasters. After a month of solidly chasing leads from Peckham to Putney with a 1hr commute from North East London, to be told I'm 7th on a waiting list and they'll let me know if they want my hard earned cash per month or not I'd had it solid: I upped sticks and moved to Wales for 3 months. I had a studio with a view of mountains and cows. I had 3 sinks all to myself. I had a realistic, nay CHEAP bill at the end of the month. Logistically it was less work, and above all it was glorious.

Here are just a few of the enviably wonderful studio complexes outside London who remain brilliantly well connected to the UK art scene and beyond. You could even have a window that opens.

Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun - Leeds

East Street Arts - Leeds

BLOC Projects - Sheffield

Grand Union Studios - Birmingham

Newbridge Project – Newcastle

The Royal Standard – Liverpool

RESIDENTIAL PROPECTS

If you don't fancy simply upping sticks solo, residencies are a great way to experience a new place, and a way to find a making space. The links on the opposite page are pretty good places to find a rundown of wopportunities, but you should also look for specific residency programs you're interested in, and map a timescale for applications so you can apply throughout the year.

isendyouthis.com/opportunities.aspx

blog.re-title.com/opportunities/

artquest.org.uk/articles/view/visual-arts4

artsadmin.co.uk/resources/e-digest

Our visiting associates listed a few specific examples that sounded pretty peachy too- Skowegan, Gasworks Triangle Residencies, Popty, Grizedale Arts, Wysing, Riksakademie.

And our current Into The Wild cohort have tried out some great opportunities including:

ACAVA & UAL Lifeboat, One year studio residency

REACH, Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop
edinburghsculpture.org/opportunities-featured/reach-scotland/

Art Commune, Yerevan, Armenia
acsl.am/art-commune-2/

SNEHTA, Athens, Greece
snehtaresidency.org

Space Under - Sound Tectonics, Athens, Greece
spaceunder.com/education/categories/sound-tectonics/

LONDON BABY

If you're set on staying, sign up to the waiting lists for London's non-profit studio spaces ASAP, they have the lowest prices per sqft in London traditionally, as they are non-profit of charities.

SPACE Studios, Cell, ACAA, V22, ACME, Chisenhale Studios

You pay a nominal fee [usually about £15 or free for some] for sign up to some but it's worth it, you're on for life and will get updates and newsletters for studios and sublets and shares when they become available.

ARTICULATING YOURSELF - THE ARTIST STATEMENT

It's not long ago, that I could be actually be bothered with writing my artist statement. Mainly because whenever I read one, I'd get frustrated at the use of a certain language, or references to certain philosophers, that shared no relation or resemblance to the actual work. They seemed to me, to only exist to show how intellectual a person was, rather than to inform me of what the artists practice was.

But I was wrong.

I'm beginning to see the potential in the artist statement, and how it can be a useful tool. It can help you understand your practice, and give some clarity to the tangled ideas in your head. It's something I've always put off, because I was afraid to sit down and dedicate a day to thinking about my work. I was afraid I would unravel the tangle in my head and be left with a bigger mess, but it isn't like that. It does help.

Here's an example when this understanding could have helped you (me) out in 'real life':

You're at one of those openings and you're looking at a video on a monitor, it's a decent video- you're enjoying it. You're feeling like- yeah I like art, I make art, I am an artist. Then someone sees that you are really enjoying the video, they don't know you and you don't know them. They walk towards you and you both speak about the video, and you're speaking about this video in front with such enthusiasm. Then the person asks you that unforeseeable question:

'What's your art about?'

It's here where you start to sweat and get pissed off at the situation, because inside you're thinking -I know what I do- but you cant seem to get it out. Then you say something like:

'I make sculpture...,' You shudder at your response, and awkwardly make an excuse to walk to the bar.
DISCLAIMER: It's OK to just make sculpture and even say 'i make sculpture', it is OK> it is OK.

Granted it might not be brilliant that first time, and it's easier to say 'just write it' than actually writing it. You're not writing down directions to the shops, you're writing about you're practice which is a little bit more complicated. It takes time and patience to write.

When writing the statement, there are some useful guidelines that I try to follow. They might be useful to you, or completely irrelevant.

THEY ARE:

- As a quick exercise you could write a short description of a piece of your work trying to explain it to a child, dead poet, a peer and a professor; and compare the different tones of language you write in. The benefit of this exercise is to loosen your use of language and give you different perspectives on tone. This exercise and many others were introduced to our group by the fantastic Sally O'Rielly.
- Try writing a short statement in first person and third person, to give you an idea of the different tones.
- Don't be afraid to write. Sit down, make yourself comfortable however that might be watch X Files, sip a green tea, have a Tyskie- you choose. Just write it down. Throw it all out on the page!
- The first draft might not be great, but try not to get disheartened. Just go over it and tweak it and keep on tweaking it until it's saying what you want it to say. It might not happen in a day.
- Consider the words you are using, there might be some better ones out there (it's good to have thesaurus next to you).
- Get a friend to read it. Get the Butcher to read it. Get that person who works at the shop to read it. Get your mum and dad to read it. Get Nelly the Elephant to read it. Don't just get your art mates to read it.
- Lastly... please no unnecessary use of art jargons.

Funding your art practice is a familiar issue for artists, and one thing that became evident during the Into The Wild talks is that this issue rarely goes away. Yet however ambitious (monetarily) a project is, one clear message was revealed throughout the seminars: the money is out there, you just need to be ingenious in how you get it. There are as many ways to fund a practice as there are artists, and each of the speakers had a tale of rising and falling fortunes during their career. This section concentrates on where to look when you can't, or won't, fund a project off your own back.

PEOPLE NEAR TO YOU

We'd probably be surprised how much those close to us are willing to help us, and we shouldn't underestimate their generosity when working towards a project. Asking those you know for small donations can work really well, as demonstrated by some of the In To the Wild speakers. Maybe sweeten the deal by offering a small token to say thanks.

THE PEOPLE NOT SO NEAR

You'd be equally amazed how a well written proposal combined with crowdfunding can whip people you've never met into a frenzy of shelling out some serious dollar. People like a good idea, particularly if they feel like they can get involved, or have some affinity to the project or your practice. This funding technique is more suitable to some work than others – it is a lot easier to gather interest with an idea that engages others and isn't just a personal project.

ANGELS, PATRONS, SPONSORS

Big business has big money, and you'd be surprised how they like to spend it. We were told about Angel Investors, people who will give you money in return for the pleasure of supporting your practice. Similarly there are patrons, individuals willing to give ongoing support; sponsors who will offer funding in return for something (i.e advertising); and partners who want to have a bit more involvement with your ideas in return for their money, contacts and experience. The difficult bit is probably finding these people in the first place.

PUBLIC COMMISSION

Whether an open call supported by a gallery, a public commission by the government or that for a private developer, large amounts of money are made available to artists to complete work which engages with the environment and community. Often there are requirements to fulfill within the proposal, but if you're successful you can become responsible for a large budget and therefore access to professionals who can help you realise the project

ARTS COUNCIL

The Arts Council is the backbone of funding for all non-commercial arts institutions, and individual artists too. Other than the drip down effect of commissions via galleries, the arts council also offers 'Grants for the Arts' which are open for any practitioner. The grants span anything from £1000 to £100,000, with two different routes for grants above and below £15,000. Obviously, there are quite a few people fighting for this money. As such, before you begin writing a proposal to the Arts Council, it's vital to know what criteria you need to fulfil – for details on how to apply see: artscouncil.org.uk/funding/grants-arts/2016/how-apply/.

NOTE: DINNER AND A SHOW

The Arts Council has also kindly divided the populace into specific groups based on their level of engagement with the arts, socio-economic status and political outlook. When you write an application you should have in mind that you will be expected to have a target audience, and a want to engage more of society than just your arty mates (see the 'not currently engaged' lot of the pdf below). If nothing else it makes for very interesting / slightly disturbing reading. Download from: http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/arts_audience_insight_2011.pdf

LOANS

Funding can take the form of a loan. Until student loans come in for doing an MA, artists have been taking out career advancement loans to support themselves through the course. There is also 'Creative Industry Finance', and Arts Council Initiative delivered by Creative United which is geared towards creative business and enterprise.

MONETISING YOUR WORK

It's perhaps worth for some artists to consider producing work which is more sellable to support the experimental side of their practice. Some will be happier to do this than others, but it can be a valuable way of supporting yourself whilst also meaning you don't have to leave the comfort of your studio. Avenues for selling work range from market stalls to gallery representation, to asking for pay-what-you-can donations at a performance or event but how you seek to do this will depend on you and your practice.

CONS

There are of course downsides to all of this money, in the form of time spent applying, the warping effect it might have on your practice, or being complicit in gentrification/social cleansing/late capitalist exploitation of your fellow man. However we all have to pay the privatised energy bills, and it's up to each of us to decide where abouts on the 'dropping out and living in a commune' to 'making art for Coke' line we want to be. For more on this, see the 'who benefits' section. Spoiler alert: it's really up to you.

 HOW TO FIND OUT ABOUT ALL THIS MONEY

Search the people below, follow them on social media, sign up to Artists Newsletter and as many emails as you can. Read art magazines in public libraries. Keep your eyes open.

 LIST OF PUBLIC FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Arts Council, British Council, Creative Scotland, Local Authority, National Lottery – Awards for All, HLF, Nesta (National Endowment of Science, Technology and the Arts), BFI, Sky Arts.

 LIST OF TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS:

Elephant Trust, Esmee Fairbairn, Calouste Gulbekian, Peter de Haan, Clore Foundation, Foyle Foundation, Paul Hamlyn, Prince's Trust, Wellcome Trust, Leverhulme, Jerwood.

Perhaps the most interesting day for me was day 6, the 30th November. In the morning, we had Belinda Holden from FutureCity, Vanessa Carlos from Carlos/Ishikawa, and Judith Carlton from Café Gallery projects. And we ended up having an enormous debate about politics.

We were shown a picture of a work of art: Shack Stack, by Richard Wilson. A series of wobbly-looking sheds, knocked together out of scrap, all cast in some sort of metal, stacked on top of one another. It looked pretty strong.

I remember seeing another work of art by Richard Wilson, in Liverpool, in 2008. It was called 'Turning The Place Over', and it was a circular section of a disused office block, cut out and spinning around in its own hole. It looked mad and scary and challenging and expensive: all important things in a city like Liverpool, all speaking respectfully to the things that make that city strange and beautiful. I was blown away.

Back to Shack Stack. We were being shown it by Belinda Holden from Futurecity (all one word, no space). They work with mainly private developers to get access to the money they're going to spend on public art, and try to spend it better. They get big-name artist into developments, and get them to do something in the foyer, or the public square, or the departure lounge at Heathrow.

In the next image, the camera pulled back from Shack Stack, to show what was around the art. You can guess, of course. That now-expected image of over-styled luxury flats, towering over the art, too close, all pointy angles, darkened windows and Patrick Bateman balconies. Looking like a bad rendering, or a bad dream. Whichever way you looked at Wilson's sculpture, they were all that you could see in the background.

And instantly, a row kicked off, about art, and money, and power, and the public, and who benefits.

We talked about Richard Wilson doing a sculpture for Heathrow (which already breaches the legal limit for emissions every year, btw) and how the chief exec wanted, in his own words, 'the most beautiful piece of sculpture in Europe'; and why he wanted that, and why he got it.

We talked about commercial galleries vs not-for-profits, and who has more independence, and who has more flexibility.

We talked about Café Gallery projects being set up by the Bermondsey Artists Group in some derelict terraces in the 80s, because you could do that then, because there were derelict terraces. We talked about Dilston Grove, an old concrete church, run as a community asset transfer for the local community, and what on earth that means. We talked about who owns Chisenhale Art Place (Tower Hamlets Borough) and how long is left on the lease (25 years) and what will happen when the lease runs out.

But mainly we talked about who benefits when good artists work in toxic developments, when they put get well paid for a good sculpture in a luxury office block.

Is it public art? Does it just give developers the cultural capital they need to tear down council housing, and pretend that what is built instead has value for the public? Is it just a fig leaf?

Is it ok to do this sort of work as an artist, if it lets you then do loads of other work for a year? Is it better than what would be there anyway? Whose responsibility is it to change the structures of society, so that art can go in a public housing estate, rather than a private housing estate? Futurecity's? Private gallery owners'? Ours? Everyones?

There's no right or wrong answer, of course. It's up to the individual, the artist, the regeneration scheme. Vanessa Carlos, talking about public art in general, summed it up well: 'sometimes I feel inspired, sometimes I feel placated, and sometimes I feel misled'

A BRIEF AND DEFINITELY IN-COMPLETE GUIDE TO GALLERY TYPES

Navigating the processes and politics of exhibiting in a space, particularly when that space is more established, can seem daunting. Each type of space functions differently, in terms of the interaction between you and the gallery owner/curator; it's not clear how the money works; and it's not always clear how to approach them in the first place.

At Into The Wild, we learnt there is no right way of doing any of this stuff. Nonetheless, this is an attempt to describe the broad differences in how each of these spaces function, what they require for the artist, and what the artist should require from them. But first:

Rule No. 1: Ask if there's some money. If you've been invited to exhibit, always ask if there's a stipend. Consider carefully whether this equates to the amount of time and effort you'll be putting in. Don't be shy about asking: if you don't ask, you don't get. If there's no money, at least you know, and can work out if you still want to do it. But always, always ask.

THE GUIDE:

FREE SPACES

Self initiated, free space where you have the freedom to do what you want.

Sometimes these spaces are only available for a day/evening.

Pros = total freedom; you can get a huge amount of space to play with.

Cons = limited availability; limited time; not normally a 'white cube'; no stipend.

HIRE-ABLES

Open access spaces which charge a fee. Some spaces also offer to send out an advert to their mailing list and other extras like access to a bar and having flyers printed.

Pros = tend to look professional; access to mailing lists and contacts (sometimes); often in easy to reach places.

Cons = can be expensive; limitations to drilling into walls/ floors; not always on the 'art radar' i.e. your audience will probably only be people who you invite directly; also because the space is booked out by pretty much whoever wants it, quality control of the other shows around you might be hit and miss.

ARTIST RUN SPACES

These can be anything from someone's flat or a warehouse to a white-walled gallery, but are run by a group of artists. They tend to be non-commercial and generally more experimental than commercial galleries. Some artist run spaces have government funding. The 'selection' process is sometimes more similar to that of a project space, other times the space shows artists closely associated to those that run it.

Pros = run by similarly passionate people; freedom to experiment; varied mix of spaces; normally free to exhibit.

Cons = helps if you know the artists running the space; there can be a lot of awkward and disorganised negotiation with the people who are running it, especially if there's a lot of them; not always any money available.

PROJECT SPACES

These can generally be defined as spaces which have some stable funding avenue (be it through hiring out studio spaces, arts council or private), and are not run explicitly for profit as with commercial galleries. They are generally experimental spaces which don't represent particular artists, but might have allegiances to some individuals, or to a group, or perhaps a 'type' of art practice. They usually only have a small number of staff dedicated to running the space.

Pros = freedom to experiment; seen as a 'step-up' from hired and free spaces; often look like commercial galleries; stipend offered (often); accept proposals; sometimes technical and logistical support; advertising often done by the space on your behalf.

Cons = sometimes a stipend isn't available; the setup of each project space is so different to the next that it's hard to say much more.

COMMERCIAL GALLERIES

These are anything from the small gallery selling landscape on the Dorset coast to the big hitters with a huge infrastructure representing the most recognisable names. Key to this is that they mostly have a select list of artists that they represent, and that they function for profit. They take a commission from each artwork sold, but in exchange do the bulk of administration, logistics, selling, taking to art fairs and sometimes support the fabrication of work, therefore taking a lot of the practical legwork out of the equation. Whether you go to them or they come to you varies hugely on the individual gallery.

Pros = financial support with making work (sometimes); solo shows (often yearly); promotion and advertising done on your behalf; will represent you to buyers and collectors; work with an aim to sell your work; your work is insured while it's with them

Cons = They take a cut of sales (sometimes including those not sold through them) which is usually 50%; pressure to produce work (particularly sellable work); galleries open and close down a lot – along with this comes certain financial; can be difficult to approach. Often becoming represented by a commercial gallery arises from a fortuitous series of events which can be hard to predict or coerce

INSTITUTIONS

The big boys and grand dames. Either entirely or mostly government funded. Some house and exhibit a public collection, others work on a commission basis by either selecting artists or inviting them to submit a proposal. Overall though, they are directed more towards the general public than any other exhibition space, and therefore hold the most direct opportunity for artists looking to interact with a broader audience.

Pros = will very often provide funding for the project; broad audience; often well established and respected; can give you access to private collections; have some freedom as they don't aim to sell work; marketing done on your behalf.

Cons = Come with their own limitations, have to structure programme according to funding; will sometimes take proposals but often not unless invited; difficult to get into unless you're mega-hype.

SOCIAL MEDIA SOCIAL MANIA, CATS OF INSTAGRAM, FAM FATALE ON FACEBOOK

Justin Hammond is something of a PR guru. He's built Art Catlin into a brand, a stamp of honour that seems to have an enduring adherence. The artists that pass through his hallowed pages tend not to fly so close to the sun that they end up in a ball of flames: they are marathon runners on the PR circuit [in a good way]. So after his talk, I wanted to write up the do's and don't's, wha-tiffs and whatnots of PR. Here they are. Ready? Ok.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Justin cites social media as a tool that has is now being readily utilised by the artists he works with to boost their profiles. So how do use social media effectively as a PR tool, without losing our online dignity?

I came late to the party with social media, and I certainly never thought that I'd be using Facebook for anything but virtually liking pictures of babies. It was a device to make life look idyllic, or to shame family members with group photos that they aren't in. But, in fact, social media offers emerging artists a chance to get information out there post haste and without cost. I'd even say I LIKE Instagram now [pardon the pun]. But the perils remain and the lessons of the first Facebook users are still highly relevant.

THEY ARE:

Remember anything you share or are tagged in is visible and leaves a pixel trail. Going viral as you vomit in a pint glass on Blackpool pier at your friend's 21st is not such a great idea these days when everyone is a budding Scorsese on an iPhone.

People are WATCHING even if they are not directly following you on social media. Curators are using it as a tool to keep an eye on progress of emergent artists that may be on their radar. This can be slow burn, it's like a dance that comes before a potential relationship. So yes, you may be being stalked constantly so don't freak out- just be awesome.

Keep it real- you have to be yourself. The balance between personal and push off is a delicate balance, and the artists that use social media well are those that reflect a sense of personality and professionalism in healthily equal measures.

Don't put your cat on Instagram. Well, here Hammond and I agree to disagree. I put my cat on Instagram, she's the star of my account (#SIDTHECAT), and I think this is less out of ignorance, and more that I place a greater value on what I believe is Justin's most salient piece of advice: that is, to be yourself. Especially in these initial stages, with little money, limited space and loads of pressure on your time, being yourself is pretty much all you've got.

And, for what it's worth, I looked up a couple of Hammond's good practice examples on line, Juno Calypso eating a Gregg's in a famingo blush nightie, Adeline de Monseignat's marbled peachy asses and tectonic surfaces, and what's that? YES, IT'S A CAT. Right there, on de Monseignat's page. And that's the thing, her images aren't just 'professional', they're generous in delivering a view of not just what the artist does, but what she looks at, what interests her, whose work she enjoys. This is all the golden gravy that I feel lubricates Instagram/Twitter/Facebook. It gives us a view of the artist from all sides. Rant over.

PLEASE remember though that if you post photos online, you should be savvy about credits. Is it your work, or someone else's? If so, be honest. Juno Calypso is super good at this actually....

WEBSITES

Keep your website up to date. Be relevant, be ruthless and don't make it too heavy. Attention spans are short, and the curators, selectors and collectors you so desire to attract will not want to spend hours on you. Hit them quick and hit them hard. And above all, make it reflect you. If you make very tactile work, you probably don't want to have a super slick site.

Programmes like Wordpress, WIX and Cargo offer good templates, and there are many more free versions. They do the hard work so you don't have to. The most important bit of your site is the work so dedicate your time to developing that rather than learning Java script. Although one visiting artist did give high praise to the creative control she gained by learning about web development, so it is of course a case of each to their own.

LINE UP YOUR PICKLES

Both Doug Fishbone and Justin Hammond talked about the importance of having your ships in line [or pickles as Fishbone prefers]. Be prepared, have a selection of images saved in different sizes, have your latest CV, a PDF portfolio, whatever. That way if anyone asks you for more info you are ready to send whilst the enquiry is still hot.

GET YOUR PITCH RIGHT

If you are a person [like me] who becomes a babbling lunatic when you try and fully pin down simple things like 'what are you up to' or 'what do you do', then prepare it. Practice telling someone about where you are at, get it down to 30 seconds, make it concise, make it relaxed, make it engaging, and make them want to know more. You can do this by simply describing things in the most tangible way. Avoid conceptual vagaries. If you are making a sculpture in glitter that recreates Brighton Beach tell them just that, let them visualise what will be made in actuality, then proceed to tell them where the idea comes from...but keep it simple, short and sweet. NEVER mention French Philosophy at this stage if you can possibly avoid it.

 BE NICE, BE KIND, REWIND

Stay in touch - Keeping up past or current relationships is important in moving forward- always keep previous supporters [and current ones] abreast of what's going on, they will likely be interested as they have helped to give you a past break. This applies to collectors, funders, curators, institutions, and even other artists.

 NEW NEWS IS GOOD NEWS

Newsletters are a good way to keep people up to date. Again, they need to reflect you well and professionally, contain up to date information on shows, publications, projects. Don't send them more frequently than a quarterly bulletin, you need to be updating not repeating.

You can use an existing free generator to help here: mailchimp is one example that was mentioned a lot during our sessions. On the downside, you're letting your emails be delivered by a programme with a name like 'mailchimp', and in twenty years you'll join the ranks of Earth's population cringing at a period where we had to come up with a stupid-r name for literally everything-r. Up to you.

And lastly, a key tip for spreading the word is to:

 ACTUALLY MAKE SOMEWORK.

Nothing gets peoples attention like creating something new. Nothing succeeds like success. The best way to get people talking, sharing, swiping, caring is often just to get on with what you're good at anyway.

SUCCESS IS A SPECTRUM, RIGHT?

So there are three people, they're all friends; they studied together, drank at the same pub and even at one point used the same toilet facilities. Nothing really separated them, they were all on the same level, they all had the same principles and agreed on most things, and even - dare I say it - made similar work. These three people went through art school and eventually left, they did reasonably well and felt optimistic for the future...

THE FUTURE- 20 YEARS ON

1st person:

Morning has risen and this person is waking up and about to make themselves some toast with butter.

2nd person:

The second person is currently standing on a balcony that looks over a lovely lake, eating a fresh croissant with jam (made from the fresh strawberries in their garden.)

3rd person:

Right now this person has an apple in their mouth and is opening the door to their ford fiesta, heading off to work.

All three people get back home, and sit down and do their different evening activities. They all indulge themselves in their pleasures that make their circumstances a bit more bearable. When they go to bed they all think, not in sync, but think:

Success is a spectrum, right?

I find it an incredibly crass topic to speak about, success. It's one of those areas at which I automatically switch off when brought up in conversation. As, normally, the person who is speaking about success is narrow minded in their ideas of what success is: good steady career, good food to eat, pay your taxes, owning your own home and married with two lovely children called Charlotte and George.

Of course, it's ok to know what you're doing in life and want to have these things, if it makes you happy then I'm not going to criticize your decisions. But for me, this is how the success conversation tends to go:

Each Christmas eve I meet up with old school friends (I was the only one to study Fine Art). They're all doing different things: one is a teacher, the other works for inland revenue, another works for a property company where they're a project manager, and the last friend works in construction where they're also a project manager. Each time we meet up, we speak about what we're doing; and it's always the same. Everyone seems to be happy (well on the face of things.) But the reoccurring factor that gets brought up each time, besides the nostalgia to our youth is:

'Johnny what are you doing?

'Still working at a bar, but I have a studio and making art still.'

Then the normal response that could be taken as patronizing is,

'Why don't you get a trade John, like Westy makes loads of money now, and he's got his own van.'

But I'm not Westy I think to myself, and walk away to the bar and get a drink to get through the rest of the night's conversation. I don't blame my friends for their questions; it's just how it is. They're only trying to look out for me.

Like most people, I think they have an idea of the artist being someone who is sitting in the Cotswolds painting horses and daffodils, and breathing in the sun.

Although this misunderstanding goes two ways. An example of this (I'm embarrassed to admit to the following) is the jealousy that I feel towards friends and peers careers, I look at them and think I am making just as good work as you are-'why don't I get a show'

I know this jealousy is foolish, but it's a feeling I can't shrug off for at least a few days. But it's a natural emotion to feel- right? So I don't think we should be too ashamed of our jealousy, were only humans after all.

Although when it's finally off my mind, I realize that these insecurities are deeply saddening. As it's not the jealousy that's too bad, it's the not sharing or helping out each other that puts a competition between artists, whereas instead of trying to outdo each other-we should be more willing to share and help!

So what is success, well it's all-relative-right?

For me I aspire to be able to live of my art, and sometimes be able to buy the good cereals in the morning, and not just boring bran flakes. I want to have a solo show at the ICA, I want to get funding, and I also wouldn't mind teaching a bit.

It's a bit embarrassing admitting to what you want from your art.

But it's a necessity to at least acknowledge what you want to get out of your art.

It could be driving down the sunny roads of LA, it could be being represented by a big gallery, or it could just be doing it for you and not caring about the rest of the art world.

I guess as long as you know what direction you want to go, just go that way. And try not to shit on each other, be nice.

