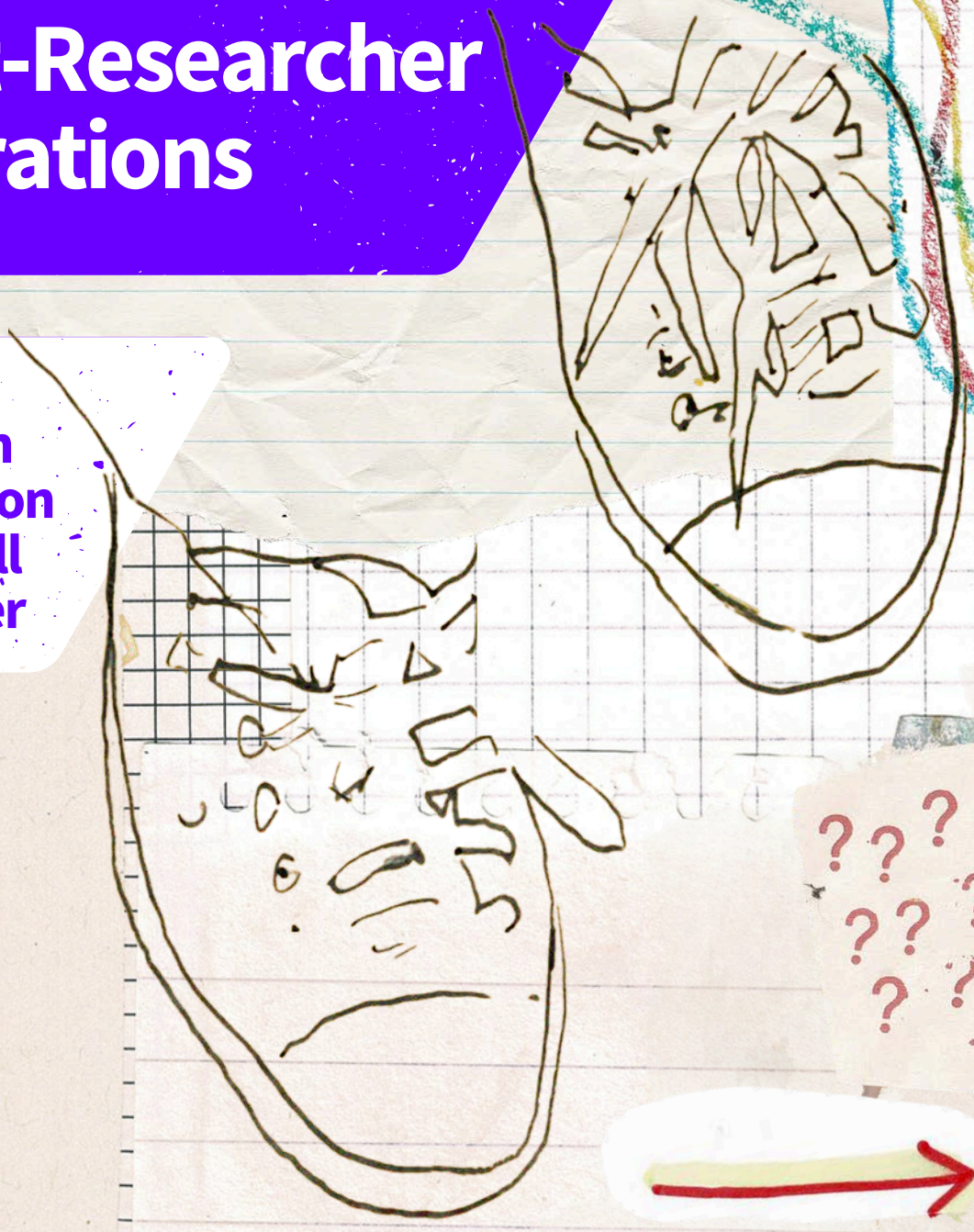
A FIELD GUIDE
To Artist-Researcher Collaborations



co-authored by

Jean McEwan
Susan Morrison
Rhiannon Bull
Jimmy Turner

OUTWITH
FIELD GUIDES

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Library

Foreword to the Outwith Field Guide Series

This is the first in a series of Field Guides designed to help you navigate the participatory research terrain a bit more smoothly. They do not offer a single pathway from Point A to Point B, they are not a map that perfectly represents the terrain, and they are not tied to a specific field or discipline.

Instead, each guide takes a big-picture theme, topic, or issue facing communities and researchers who are seeking to work together and strives to provide you with a kit that will help you survive and, ideally, even thrive in the wilderness.

You can choose to read them from cover to cover, or to dip in and out – and you will find that each Field Guide is radically different in kind from its neighbours. How you engage with these guides is up to you, and we have worked to make them multi-functional. Their intention is to support you in your work regardless of your role.

We expect many of you will be researchers, but you may also be an art curator, a journalist, an engagement officer, a funder a project participant, or simply an interested bystander: regardless, you are welcome here, and we encourage you to treat the guides as a starting point for your journey, and a guide during your explorations.

Foreword for the Lite Version

This “lite” version of the Field Guide is designed for easier engagement and reading. Where possible, we have strived to retain the meaning and artistic nature of the original edition. We have standardised the text format, ensuring consistent sizing and sans-serif font throughout, and removed distracting backgrounds to the text. We have removed decorative and artistic elements where we felt these may be distracting. Where appropriate, we have added in transcriptions from the hand-written elements in artworks.

Nel Coleman

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THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

EDINBURGH DIAMOND

THE BINKS HUB

"It was a long time before I understood that even the simplest of field guides are far from transparent windows on to nature. You need to learn how to read them against the messiness of reality."

- Helen Macdonald, 'Vesper Flights'
(London: Vintage, 2020), 46.

This field guide belongs to


GO
Join
START
research
funding
plan
Meet
SHARE
CONNECT
GOALS
Audiences
benefit
voice
DESIGN
Effective
remit vt to send payment;
scribe; to act part of; to stand for; to
be entitled to speak for
MORAL MASUOKA
Experience
remembrance n memory; recollec-

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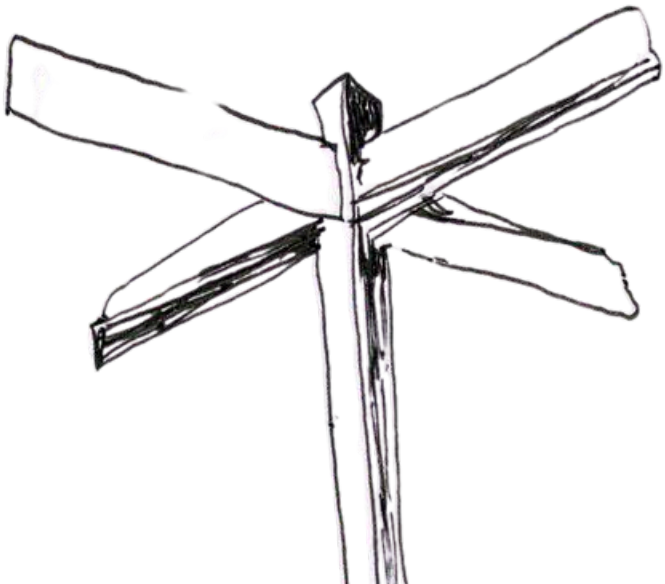


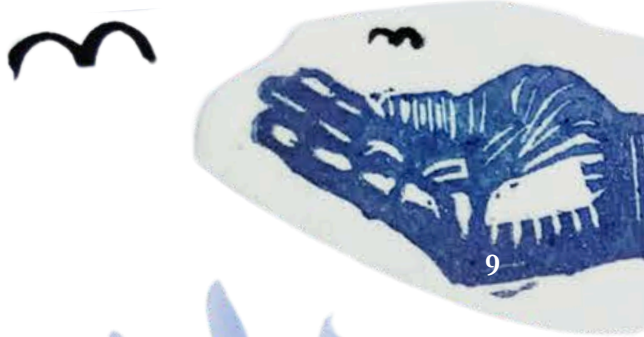
Chapter 1

Orientation

ORIENTATION

This field guide has its roots in discussions between the four editors as part of our work with the Binks Hub, a team of researchers at the University of Edinburgh who centre creative methods and collaborations with participatory artists in order to co-create participatory research with marginalised communities. Between the four of us, we have extensive experience working as both artists and researchers on a range of university projects. Some of these projects have been brilliant, truly collaborative, experiences. We have found that when researchers open up to different voices and enter into dialogue and thinking with artistic practices, it can offer alternatives to rigid and linear paths and open up a project to the kinds of unpredictable shapes, outcomes and impacts that are otherwise rendered invisible to academic researchers. However, we've also had experiences where projects haven't unfolded the way we might have liked them to.

Engaging the network of artists we have worked with through both the Binks Hub and beyond, we embarked on a project to find out from artists'



perspectives what works well and what could be done better when it comes to artist-researcher collaborations. We designed and delivered a pair of collaborative workshops with 18 other artists who had experience collaborating with academic social researchers. Working together, we looked for common successes and pitfalls, exploring what had led to meaningful work and what had ended in frustration for artists as they navigate the terrain of artist-researcher collaborations. The information brought together in this field guide is the result of that work. We originally conceived this as primarily for use by researchers, but hope that it will be helpful to anyone who wants to learn more about artist-researcher collaborations.

Who we are

This field guide is the result of collaborative work between 22 artists (listed at the end of the guide), and it uses the words and insights from every artist who participated before being edited by the four of us into its current form. The four of us who conceived, ran, and edited this project are

Jean M Ewan
Visual & participatory artist working with community & research projects for 20+ years, Binks Hub Advisory Group member.

Susan Morrison
Comedian & writer – project leader for Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas, Binks Hub Advisory Group member.

Jimmy Turner
Artist/researcher – anthropologist, artist, woodworker & curator, Binks Hub Research Fellow.

Rhiannon Bull
Artist/researcher – writer & illustrator undertaking PhD research on climate anxiety & creative writing, former Binks Hub team member.

Why a ‘field guide’?

The concept of a ‘Field guide’ seems, to us, to capture the essence of what we are trying to do when artists and researchers work together. A field guide is used as a tool to aid exploration, it is particularly useful when exploring unfamiliar terrain, and it can be scrawled over and doodled in to reflect its owner’s own journey into new realms.

Collectively, we have learned that collaborations always require unique, individual approaches, are always contextual, and always centre on interpersonal relationships. We don’t want you to just see artists as artists, or these collaborations as simple and generic. Each time we embark on a creative research project, there is a real need for academics and artists to explore each other’s worlds.

This field guide, then, is neither a map which ‘fixes’ this terrain, nor a how-to guide. Instead, we want to engage with you creatively, and to invite you to engage imaginatively with our findings as you develop your own, deeper ideas.

How to creatively use this field guide

In keeping with the ethos of a field guide, we want this document to be something you use, annotate, and think creatively with. We are not expecting that everyone will need or want to work through the whole guide, nor necessarily in the order in which we present it to you, and we have no doubt that there will be stages or steps in your own projects which are not covered here. For such ‘gaps’, we would encourage you to produce your own sections and slip them into the guide.

Some of the exercises here might feel uncomfortable. Even if we might want to work with an artist on a research project, that doesn't mean we want to be an artist ourselves. Not everyone is comfortable expressing themselves visually or through performance, and not everyone has positive experiences of creative practice.

But this discomfort is exactly why we recommend doing these exercises, safely and privately: because every time we ask an artist to get involved in a research project, we're asking them to put themselves through that same discomfort. As unfamiliar as creative practice can feel to (most) academics, academic research practice can feel equally unfamiliar to (many) artists. If you need further reassurance, the researchers participating in the project – both those running the project, and those who joined us for an initial presentation of our findings at the International Creative Research Methods Conference in 2024 – found taking this approach to be helpful.

We found that thinking visually, materially, performatively, and through artful prose allowed for different kinds of understandings and conclusions than thinking through academic writing or discussion tends to permit, and we hope that you'll also find some of the same value in doing so.

Chapter 2

getting here

GETTING HERE

As everyone knows, the best books all include a map at the beginning.

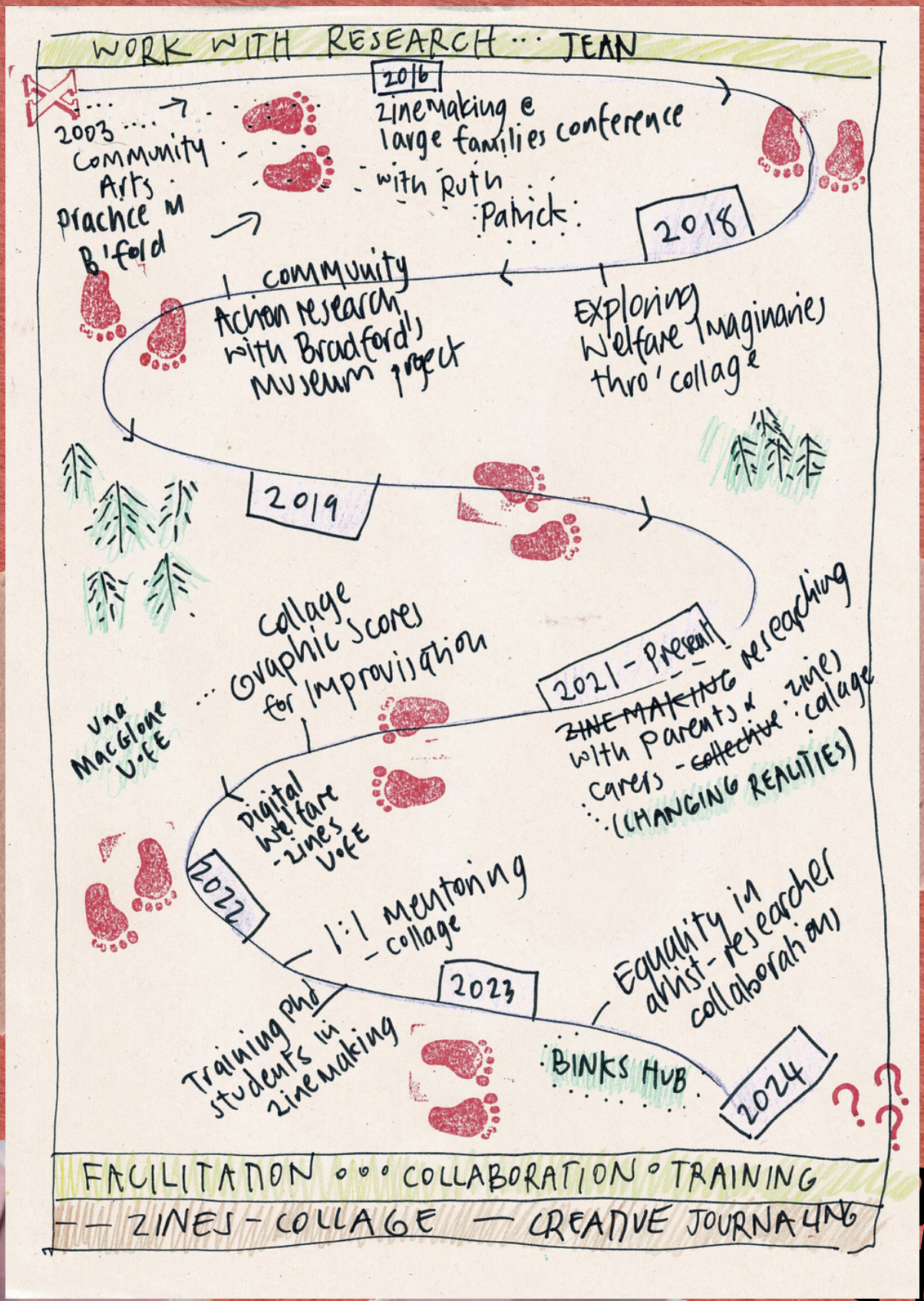
A map of places referred to.

A map of how to navigate different chapters.

A treasure map secreted between the leaves decades ago but never recovered...

This book is no different (well, maybe with fewer doubloons), but the maps we are interested in here do not map out, or fix, the terrain of artist-researcher collaborations. Rather, they help us to understand how we arrived at this moment.

We began each of the workshops developed for this project with maps, which we had invited participating artists to prepare before the sessions began. They all received a brief preparatory note from Jean, with her own map as an example.


WORK WITH RESEARCH ··· JEAN
2003 ···· Community Arts practice in B'fold
2016
zinemaking @ large families conference with Ruth Patrick
2018
community Action research with Bradford's Museum project
Exploring Welfare Imaginaries thro' collage
2019
collage graphic scores for improvisation
Una MacGlone U•FE
2021 - Present
~~ZINE MAKING~~ researching with parents & carers - ~~collective~~ zine) collage (CHANGING REALITIES)
digital welfare zines U•FE
2022
1:1 mentoring collage
2023
Training phd students in zinemaking
Equality in artist-researcher collaborations
BINKS HUB
2024
FACILITATION ··· COLLABORATION • TRAINING
— ZINES - COLLAGE — CREATIVE JOURNALING

JEAN'S MAP

To help us warm up for our session, we would like to invite you to do a short exercise - to create a map of your own journey in working with art and research. This can be in any format that is meaningful to you - a drawing, sketch or collage, some written or spoken words, or anything else that works for you. The purpose of this is to reflect on your own experiences and knowledge and journey with/in research (from what has been important and meaningful to you to considering any challenges). We'll share our maps at the beginning of the day as a way of introducing ourselves and as a starting point for exploring and gathering what we know. Please don't take any longer than an hour to do this, and bring your map with you on the day.

At the start of the workshops, we each shared artistic or creative 'maps' of the experiences which had brought us to participate in the sessions, and quickly found that we had each approached the task in our own way. Some of us used the artistic practices we were most familiar with, while others experimented with new or different methods. Some spent less than an hour (one participant even drew her map on her hand on the bus on the way to the workshop), while others, as you will see, took much longer.

Over the next few pages, we'll share some examples of the maps we created, alongside our reflections on what we found helpful about this exercise, and why we want to invite you to also craft your own map now. We hope that making your own map might be a helpful exercise for you to both understand what brought you to using this field guide, and how you might engage with it.

Jimmy's map

I began my journey to the intersection of social research and art from an exclusively research background. The journey started in 2006 when, during doctoral methods training, I conducted a mini-ethnography of an art gallery and encountered a young man who was, like me, alone, carrying a notebook, and behaving differently than the other people there. He was a professional picture frame restorer – a craft predicated on not being noticed, and instead silently elevating the main attraction. I have been fascinated by frames ever since, and it was thinking back to this encounter, which felt like a good starting point in my journey, that led me to need to make a frame as my map:

JIMMY'S MAP

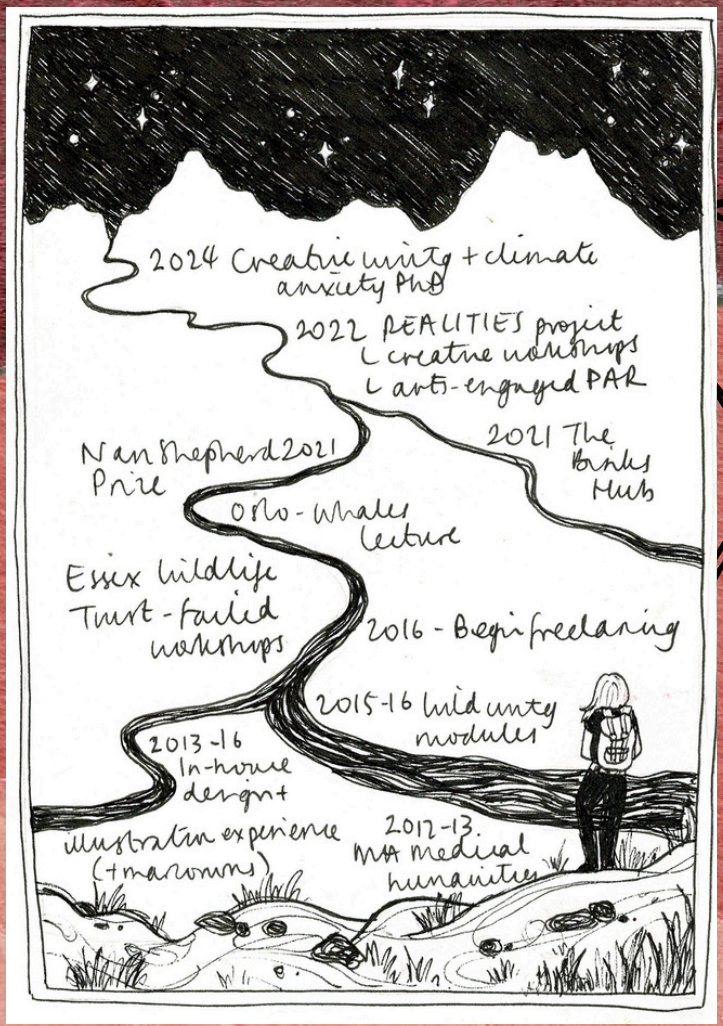
During my doctoral and postdoctoral fieldwork in Brazil, art remained largely separate from research. I was not researching art, and certainly not researching artistically. Art was something that happened alongside my research, and I remained an anthropologist who also happened to like art, as opposed to an anthropologist of art. I took up woodworking in 2018 as a therapeutic hobby to escape from work, but this changed the following year when I organised a two-month artistic residency with three Rio graffiti artists. I had planned to research the residency ethnographically while they made art about masculinities, but they had other ideas, and encouraged me to make art alongside them, and then join them in co-curating an exhibition of what we had all created. I had, accidentally, become an exhibiting artist and curator. This changed everything for me, and now the majority of my work is as an artist/researcher and concerned with the use of artistic and creative methods and practices in participatory social research.

When approaching the task of preparing a map of my journey, I knew that I needed to do so in collaboration with wood, and particularly with wood from different periods of my journey (pine from 2006; walnut from 2018; cherry from 2019-2022; and reclaimed teak from 2022).

Woodworking by hand is often a slow process, so I took quite a lot longer than an hour, but my map needed to be made this way, and I needed this time in manual collaboration with these particular pieces of wood to really remember and come to an understanding of my journey. Making any kind of creative map would have been valuable, but finding the method and materials which worked best for me definitely increased the value of the process. It helped me to enter the workshops with a clearer view of myself, and gave me the courage to engage with the various tasks we all undertook together in ways which suited me best, for example working sculpturally when most others worked in 2D modes.

Rhiannon's map

Like Jimmy, I think I sit somewhere between an artist and a researcher. More recently I have worked primarily in a research space, through my work as Project & Communications Manager with the Binks Hub, as a Research Fellow on a health inequalities project at the University of Edinburgh, and commencing a PhD at the University of Glasgow; but historically I have more experience as a freelance writer, painter, and illustrator. Yet, despite this creative experience, I still found myself surprised by both the process and outcome of Jean's mapping exercise.



RHIANNON'S MAP

I was surprised first by my nervousness at undertaking the exercise. Sitting in this hybrid artist-academic space, I felt a need to prove myself to the other artists who would be in the room, along with a pressing awareness that I wouldn't typically share a quick, time-limited piece of work with others. This discomfort didn't ease, but my nervousness was counterbalanced by what I got out of completing the exercise. As an illustrator, I don't know why it surprised me that I learned something different through approaching things visually – and yet it really did come as a surprise that presenting my experiences as a map offered something very different than trying to write out these experiences in prose.

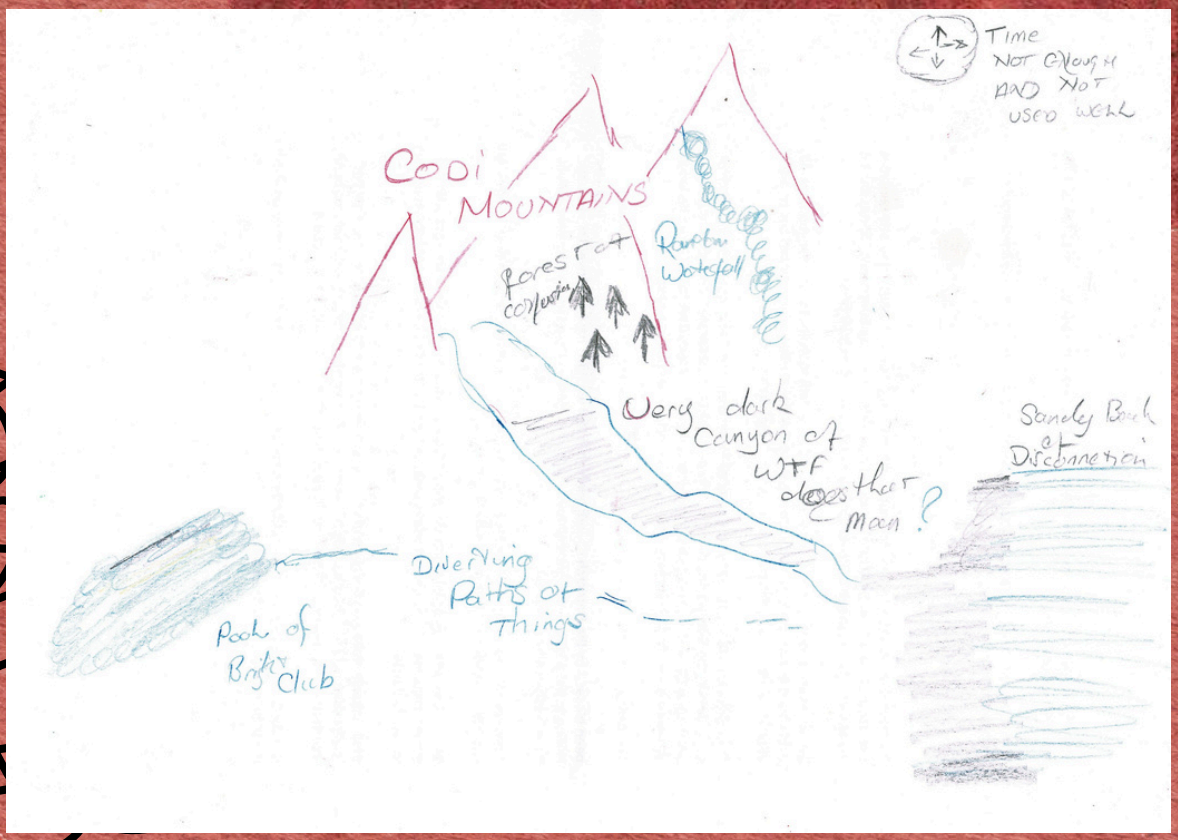
The first thing I became aware of as I started sketching was that I hadn't taken a linear route to where I am now, starting a PhD on creative writing and climate anxiety (pictured in the distant mountains). I needed to show how all of these different experiences, often seemingly disconnected but happening concurrently, had eventually fed into one another, and the resulting image that came to mind was that of a series of tributaries feeding into a river. It also felt important to communicate that this journey hadn't always been purposeful; I therefore settled on (what I hope feels like) a wistful, exploratory illustrative style.

Looking at the image in its entirety, I feel I have a more holistic understanding of this journey than I would have gleaned through reading or writing about it.

Susan’s map

My map starts with my first real engagement with researchers. I was asked to help with The Bright Club, where academics are asked to talk on stage about their subject in an amusing or funny way. It was like being thrown in at the deep end, hence the 'Pool of Bright Club'. Gradually, the Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas – an event that lets academics talk and engage with the public – evolved out of this.

This was a really steep learning curve. It's very difficult for outsiders to navigate the terrain of academic institutions. You might think you've climbed one peak, only to find another behind it, be it financial or



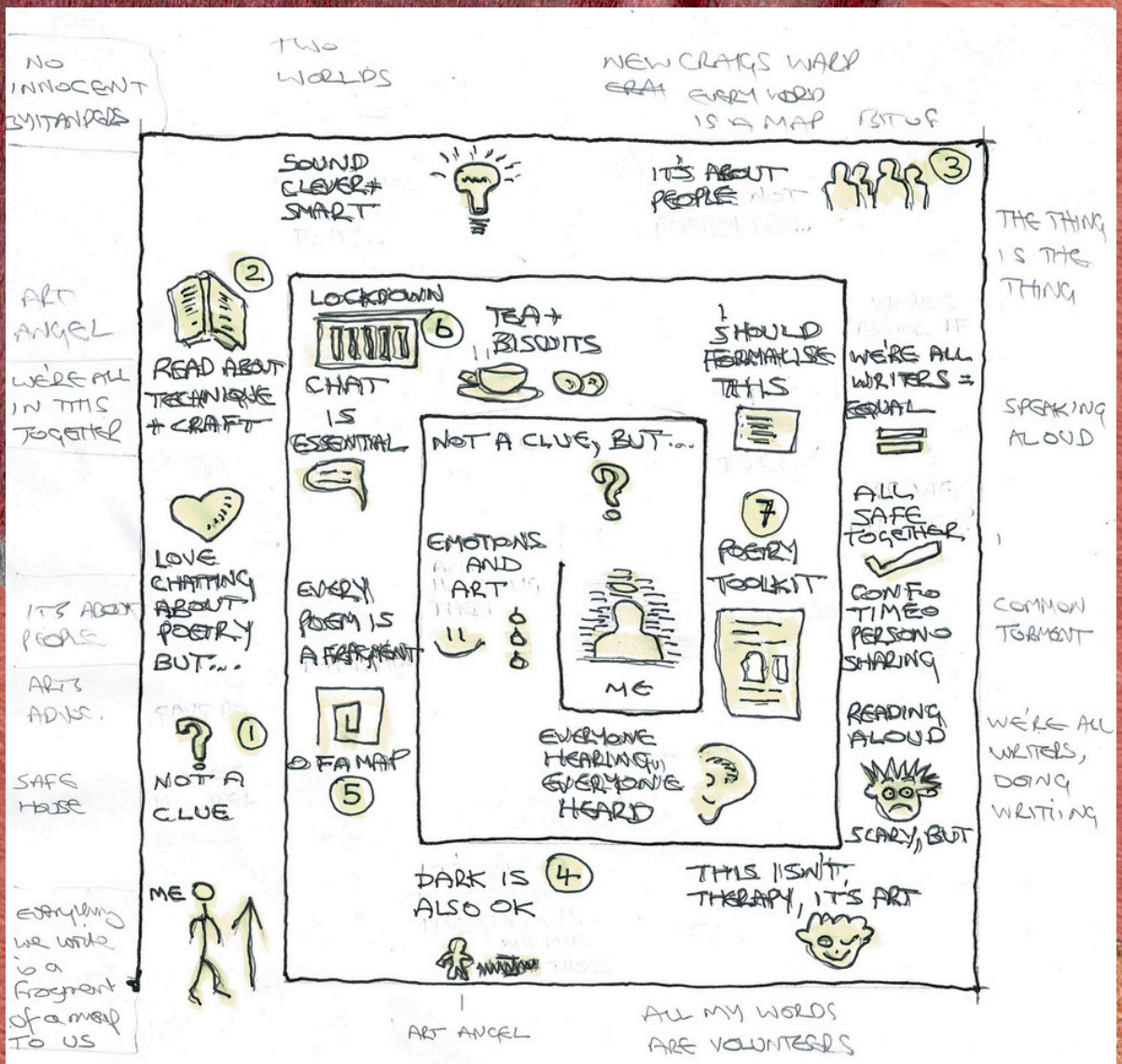
SUSAN’S MAP

administrative. There is always the danger of wandering into a nearby dark, forested glen which turns out to be a dead end. This usually happens when you talk to the wrong people, or you don't fully understand each other. Obviously, this is a rich and fabulous land to get lost in, so you can be lured away by diversions, and believe me, I often did.

There is, however, a brilliant and bright waterfall of wonderful ideas and people to talk to and work with – there just isn't enough time. And avoid that sandy beach of disconnection in the original idea. That usually leads to more rambling about in the dark forest glens!

Other artists' maps

The other 18 artists who participated in the workshops used a variety of different creative approaches, methods, and languages to create their maps. On the next few pages, you'll find further examples which might be helpful as you think about crafting your own.



STUFF I'VE NOTICED/LEARNED/STUMBLED ACROSS WHILE I'M PRETENDING I KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT

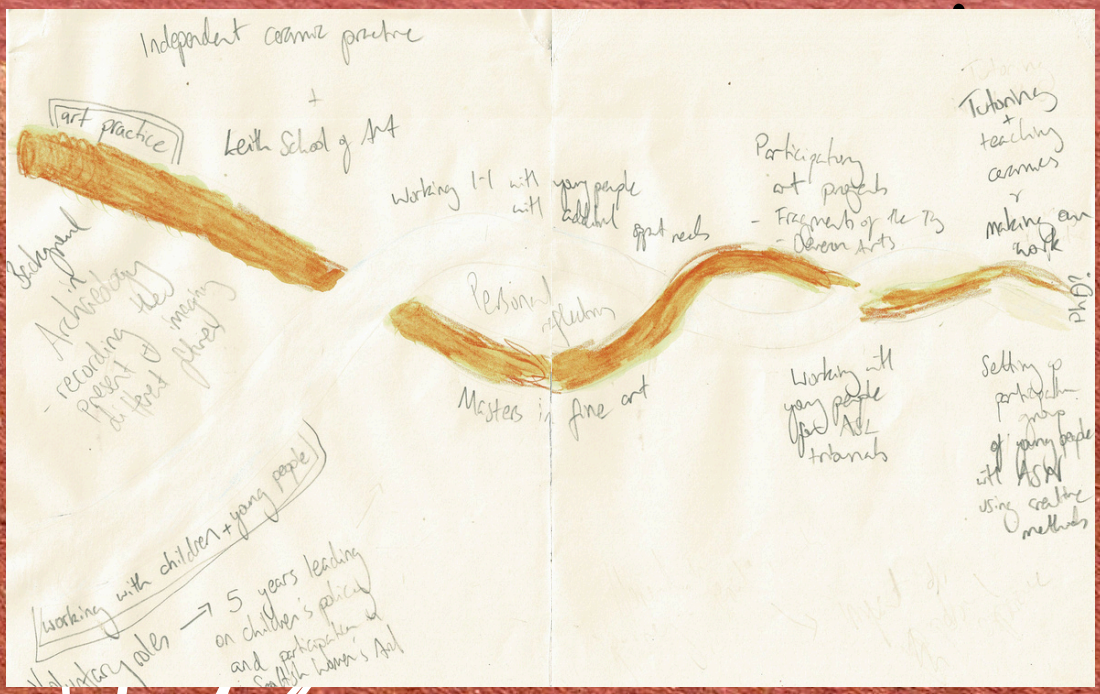
5 min rhythm - loose lines rest + repeat response

Just One Thing
Michael Morpurgo

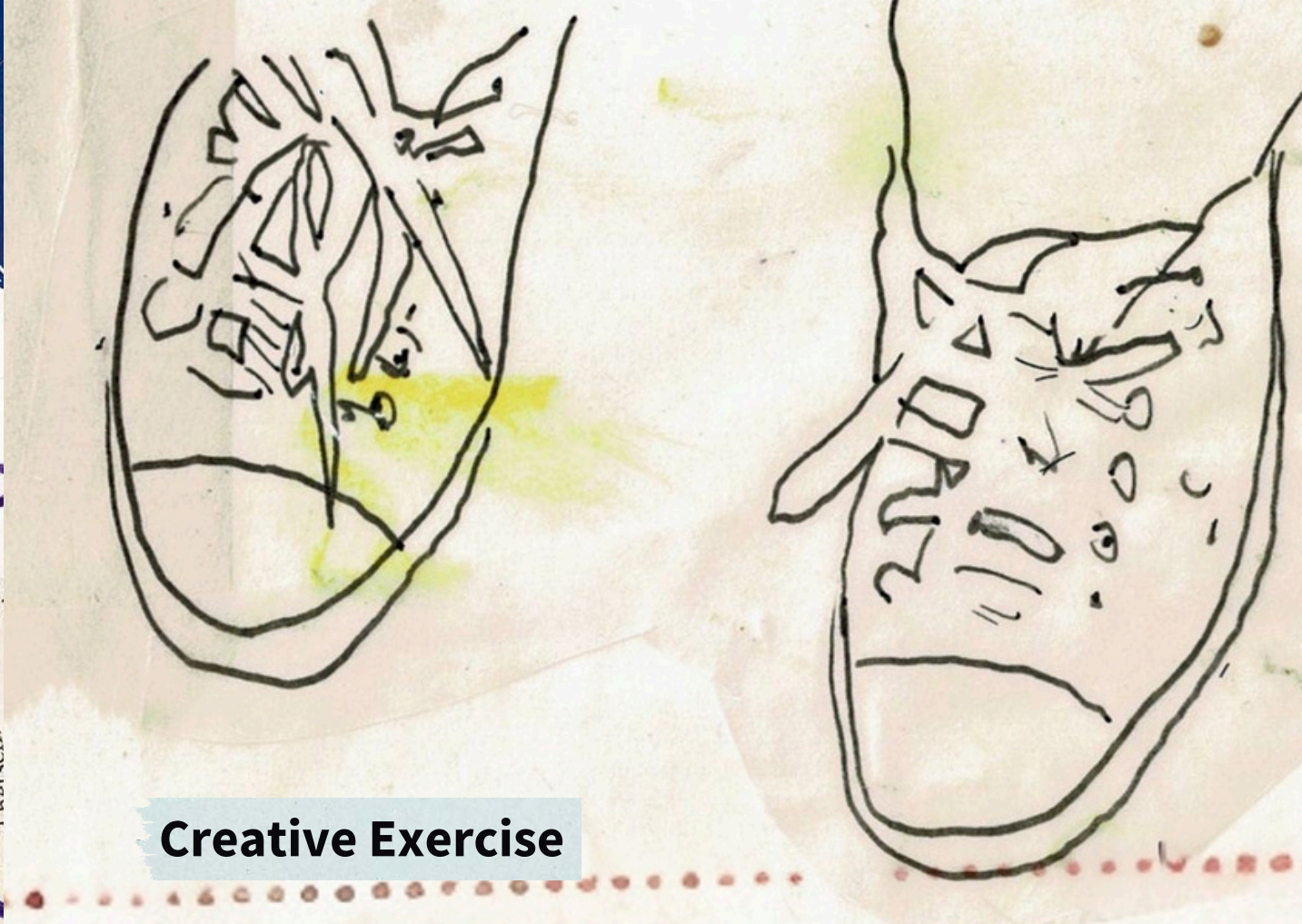
longer parasympathetic NS

JOHN GLENDAY'S MAP

ROSIE PRIEST'S MAP



SUSIE ROSE DALTON'S MAP



Creative Exercise

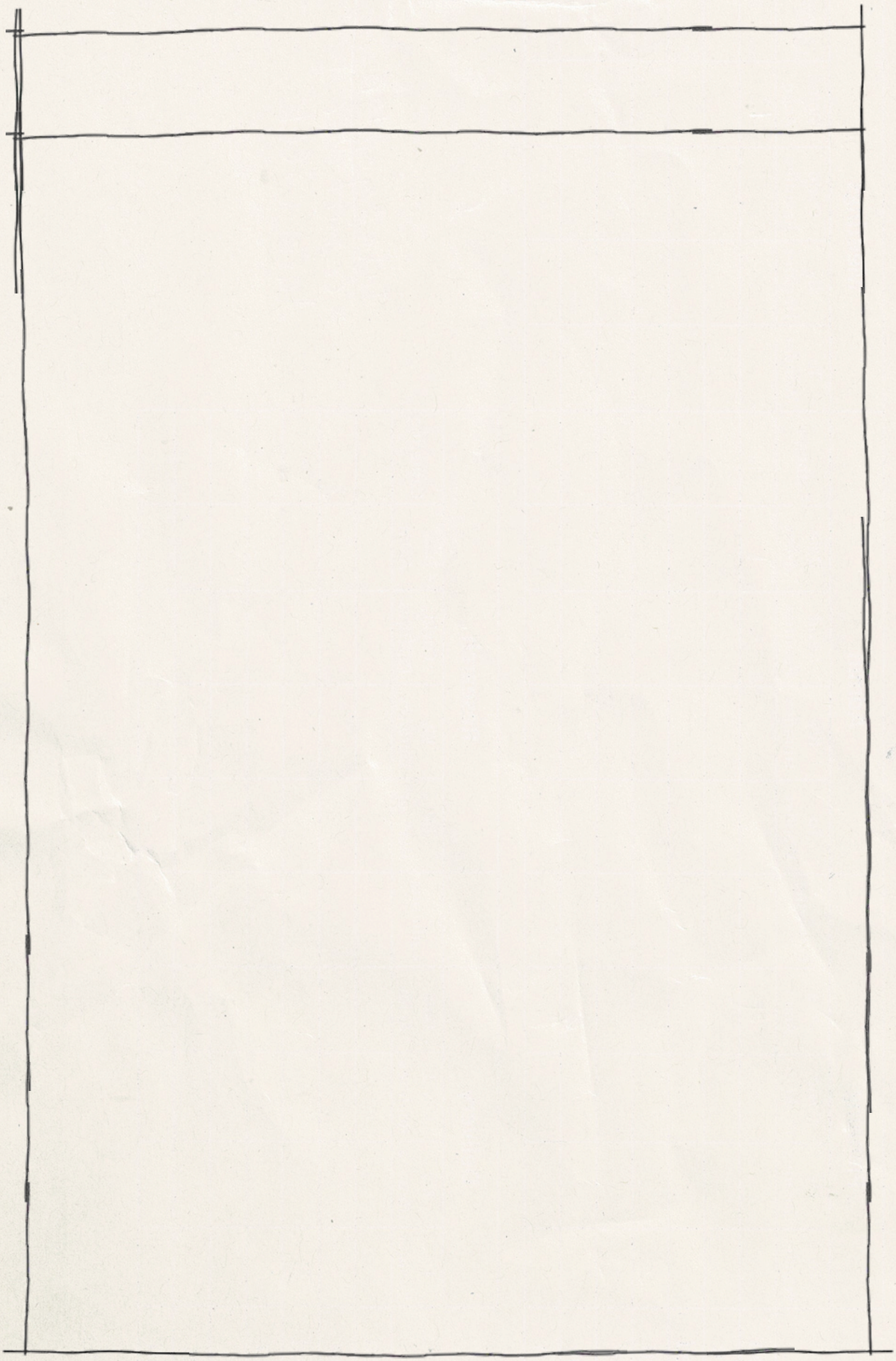
Make Your own Map

We would like to invite you to craft your own map of the journey that has brought you to this field guide. Use any artistic and creative practices you like, and interpret the word ‘map’ however you feel makes most sense to you, but take some time to explore the intersections of research and art in your own life.

We hope that clarifying for yourself how you reached this moment might help you understand more clearly where you would like to go from here, and that this will help you to make the best possible use of this field guide.

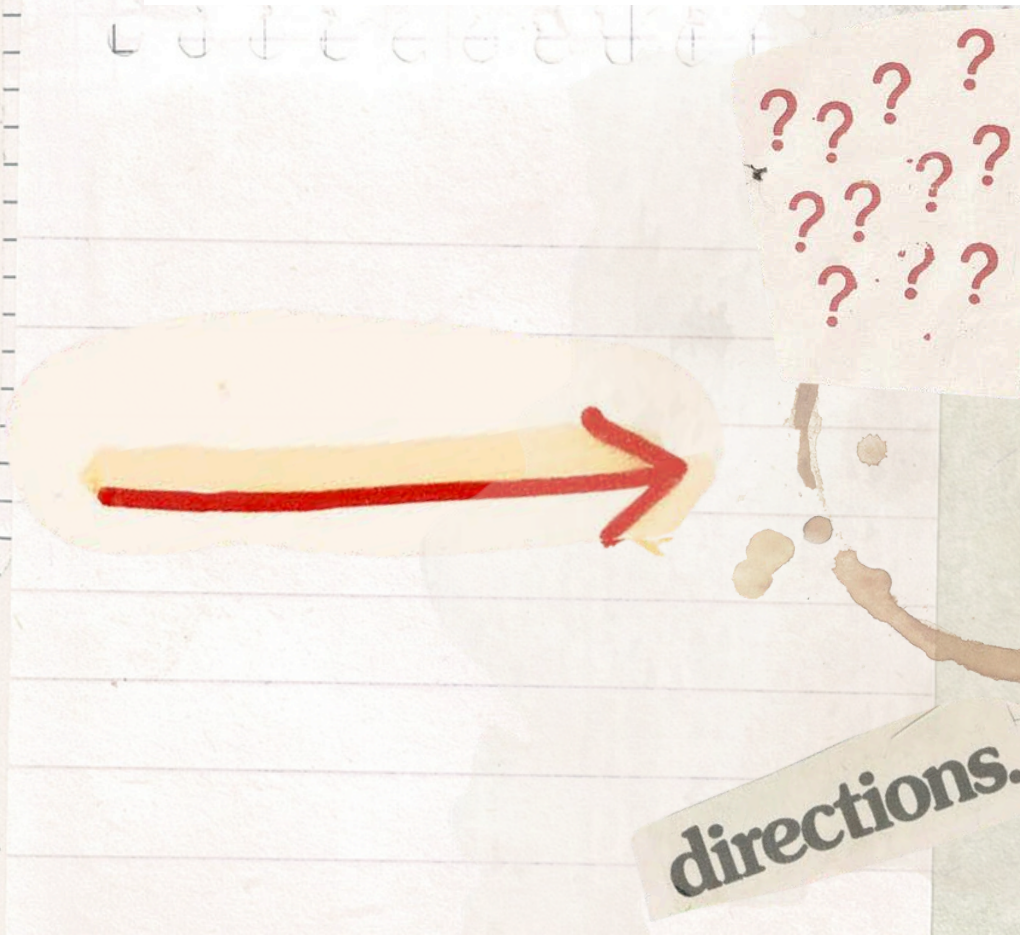
We’ve left the next page blank in case you want to craft your map directly into the field guide, but if, like Jimmy, you want to work with materials other than paper, we encourage you to do so wherever and however feels right to you.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS



Chapter 3

fair pay



FAIR PAY

While artists may be excited to collaborate, the reality of financial precarity shapes how, when, and even if they can take part in a research project. Pay – and getting paid – came up time and time again in our workshops as a fundamental issue for artists working with academic institutions. Fair pay isn't just about money – it's about making collaboration possible.

It's important to remember when budgeting for and working with freelance artists that they are not on a salary. They often don't have financial security or control over when and where they are offered work. Income is cobbled together from multiple sources, arriving unpredictably throughout the year. This means no holiday pay, no sick pay, no workplace pension. And every job comes with unseen admin – logistics, finance, meetings – which aren't always accounted for in budgets or scheduled time.

Paying artists properly enables them to bring their full creativity, insight, and expertise to a project. It fosters trust, strengthens relationships, and makes the work more meaningful for everyone involved. It underpins every aspect of collaboration and is key to:

- Ensuring artists have the material conditions to be in the room – i.e., to engage with research projects in the first place.
- Valuing artists as individuals and supporting relationship-building, which takes time (and time requires money).
- Addressing power imbalances between researchers and artists.

These are all topics we will return to in more depth throughout this field guide (see particularly sections 4, 5 and 6), but highlighting and emphasising the issues with artists' pay seems particularly important given that these problems recurred for all the artists we worked with on this project. In spite of (many) academics' best intentions, it seems that fair pay for artists is certainly not guaranteed on many creative research projects.

From our experience, the biggest challenges around pay in artist-researcher collaborations are:

1. Lack of understanding of the time required at different project stages.
2. Administrative barriers and delays in getting paid.

As a researcher working with artists, you have an opportunity to advocate for fair pay and best employment practices. Supporting professional standards enables artists to make a realistic living and strengthens the wider ecosystem of artist-researcher collaborations.

Cultural conditions: why pay is often overlooked

We live in a culture where artistic work is undervalued. There's a widespread belief that artists do what they do out of passion, or a labour of love. And while we might love what we do, that love doesn't pay the bills.

In a highly competitive landscape with shrinking numbers of paid opportunities, many artists undercharge for their time. This isn't just about individual choices, but is shaped by structural issues, such as: the level of support and validation an artist has received in their career; the fear that someone else will do the job for less; and the internalised idea that increased exposure or love of your artform is also a suitable payment for creative work.

Research from the Scottish Artists Union's Membership Survey 2023 gives a stark picture of the financial landscape for artists:

- 81% are self-employed
- 50% work full time as artists
- 73% work from home
- 83% earn less than £10k per year
- 80% expect to earn the same or less next year
- 59% have never received public funding
- 88% do not consistently get contracts
- 61% receive less than industry-standard pay
- Only 11% regularly receive the industry-standard rate
- 75% seldom or never receive a fee for exhibitions
- 53% do not believe the sector is viable for their practice

In this context, artists simply cannot do the work.

Understanding & costing an artist's time

Budgeting for an artist's time should be done together with the artist. Mapping out hopes, expectations, and commitments at each stage will help ensure the budget is realistic.

Based on the experiences shared throughout our project, we'd suggest researchers make sure they are factoring in enough time for all stages of an artist's involvement throughout a project:

- Relationship-building – Getting to know the artist and their practice.
- Briefing & research – Reading, meetings, and discussions.
- Artist development – Designing new resources and methods, or experimenting with materials.
- Planning & preparation – For workshops, participant engagement, or events.
- Communications and admin – Meetings, emails, paperwork.
- Delivery of outputs – Engagement activities or creating new artwork.
- Reflection & analysis – Involving the artist in sense-making and evaluating the work.
- Presentation & sharing – Exhibitions, conferences, co-writing papers, and any other outputs the artists will be involved in.

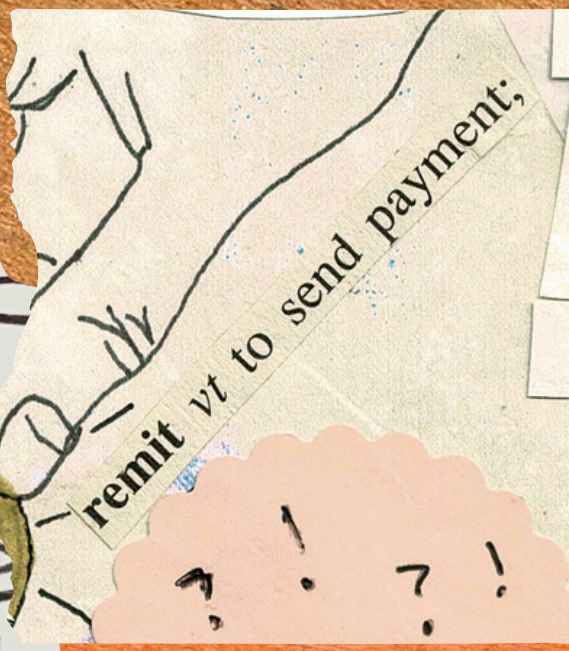
Other important costs to consider include childcare, access costs (e.g. support workers, the need to take regular breaks, or accommodations around carer responsibilities), travel and accommodation, and artists' materials. Providing clear breakdowns of time needed, communication expectations, and opportunities to flag any other access needs will help with clarity and expectations. Asking these things upfront makes for better working conditions and ensures an artist's needs aren't seen as a problem later on in the project.

Too often, the delivery of outputs is budgeted for while the less-visible (but essential) work is overlooked. Even when this is accounted for, it is important to be mindful that artists often have to front costs for materials, travel, and accommodation while sometimes waiting months for reimbursement. Budgets also tend to be underestimated, so it's

? Who is being paid, and for what?

Fair pay

money



Unpaid work

☆ Who

↳ what is needed to make it possible to be in the room?

- Payment
- Travel expenses
- Child care

wise to build in flexibility – regular check-ins and a contingency fund can help with this.

Common challenges with payment

Even when artists and researchers agree on fair pay, actually getting paid can be an ordeal. University financial systems can mean it takes months for an artist to get paid, which makes it impossible to even consider working on research projects without a financial cushion. This also entails further work for artists chasing payments and trying to find the right person to speak to in order to resolve the issue – work which both feels impossible and exhausting, and which goes unpaid. Even in the course of our project, where we were entirely committed to ensuring fair and timely pay for the artists involved, we still had an issue with one artist receiving payment for their participation in our workshop, with the university taking months to issue the payment.

How can this be done better?

As a researcher, you can make a huge difference by ensuring fair and timely pay. Before anything else, we'd suggest familiarising yourself with professional pay guidelines. Organisations like the Scottish Artists Union, the Artists' Union England, and Praxis Artist Union (in Ireland) provide recommended daily and hourly rates for artists across disciplines (visual art, performance, socially engaged art, moving image, sound, etc.), as do many others – we'd recommend checking out the rates of pay signposting guide from Creative Scotland.

Organisations Sharing Rates of Pay

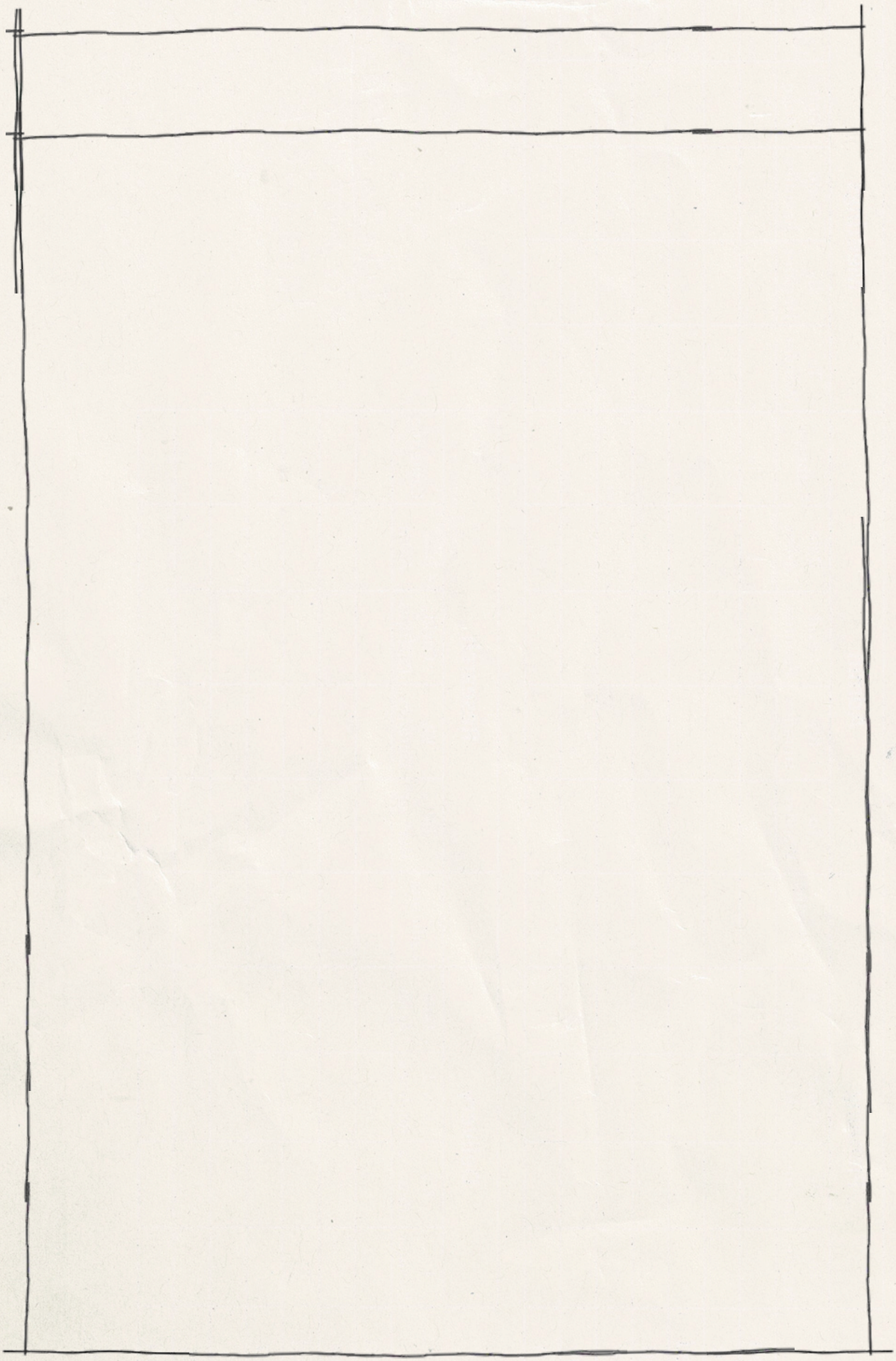
- BECTU
- Equity
- The Artist Information Company (a-n)
- The Musicians Union
- Society of Authors
- Production Base
- Scottish Society of Playwrights
- Scottish Artists Union
- Artists' Union England
- Praxis Artist Union (in Ireland)
- Traditional Arts & Culture Scotland (TRACS)

Some other important steps you can take to help things run more smoothly for the artist include:

- **Advocate for training on university payment systems.** Many researchers are just as frustrated as artists when payments don't go through, so ensuring you have an understanding of what is involved in the process for artists in getting paid will mean you can at least understand what will be required of them.
- **Be transparent about processing times.** How long will it actually take for an artist to get paid? You might not have any control over this, but if the artist has this information upfront, they can make an informed decision about whether it's possible to take on this work.
- **Make sure all time is accounted for.** This means including time for meetings, prep, research, emails, follow-ups, reflection, and analysis. Think beyond just deliverables.
- **Work out a realistic budget and contract with the artist.** Don't guess, collaborate. Check in regularly – even when initial cost estimates have been provided, realities shift. Is there extra in the budget to cover any unexpected costs or additional time needed to work on a project?

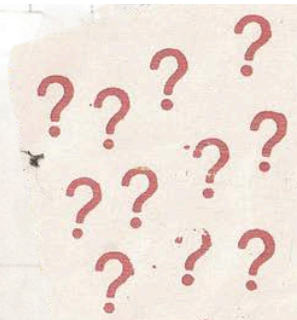
If universities and researchers want to work with artists, they need to build fair and sustainable conditions. And pay is a big part of that.

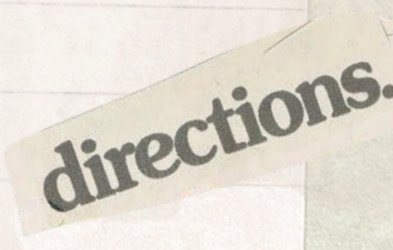
FIELD OBSERVATIONS



Chapter 4

power





POWER

Thinking about power and agency in a collaboration is essential. Even if an academic (especially those in precarious roles) feels powerless, they still represent a large institution.

A recurring suggestion in our workshops was that even where an artist's role may not come in until towards the end of a project, making them a (funded) part of the team from earlier stages would allow them to input and potentially steer the project towards producing more effective dissemination and communication outputs at the end. It would help them to gain deeper understandings of the data and its collection, to build points into the timeline at which they can gather materials which might feed into these outputs, and would go some distance towards mitigating power imbalances in the team.

Too often, projects begin with a researcher's idea, with artists only brought in later, and with little guidance and poor communication from the research team. This creates a built-in hierarchy with the researcher assuming the role of 'expert', while the artist is expected to fulfill a predefined function, often with little say in shaping the project. But treating artists as equal members of a research team rather than as hired hands can bring huge benefits to a

project. There is no reason to think that an artist won't approach research and knowledge production every bit as seriously and carefully as a trained academic researcher, or that they won't have something to bring from their practices and expertise.

This is not to say that it is necessarily a problem for your project to only include an artist's practice at the end stage – indeed, one of the commonest ways in which artists are invited to participate in research is in the translation of research findings into artistic forms for communication and dissemination beyond academia. This can be a great use of an artist's skills, and for many artists this is a great way to collaborate with universities, community organisations and research participants. However, if your research questions and methodology are already set, it's important to be honest about that.

Conversely, if you are aiming for a more collaborative approach, you also need to be honest about whether you have the time and resources to explore shared urgencies, interests, and desires – as well as to enter into a process without a known outcome, full of uncertainties and possibilities. In other words, are you truly open to accepting creative input? An equal collaboration means that artists should feel comfortable questioning project methods, challenging unrealistic budgets, and pointing out when researchers are looking in the wrong places for results. Their lived experience and expertise should inform the project, not just serve it.

How can this be done better?

Take a look at this indicative timeline and think about a project you are planning. When, where, and how do you think that an artist could make a positive and interesting impact?

RESEARCH PHASES	POTENTIAL ARTISTS' INPUT
Conceptualisation	
Research team formation	
Project design	
methods planning	
ethics planning	
Data collection	
analysis	
output production	
dissemination	

Power Up!

Fair Pay

Support to take part,
e.g. childcare)

Co-design

Care + Safety planning

SUSIE ROSE DALTON

Tokenism

Unpaid work

Not enough time

Jargon

Power down


song-flight
SHARE
power
spark
Whitethroat
EXPLORE
GROWING
IDEAS
ARTISTS
make
EVERYONE
EQUAL

JENNY CAPON

Creative Exercise

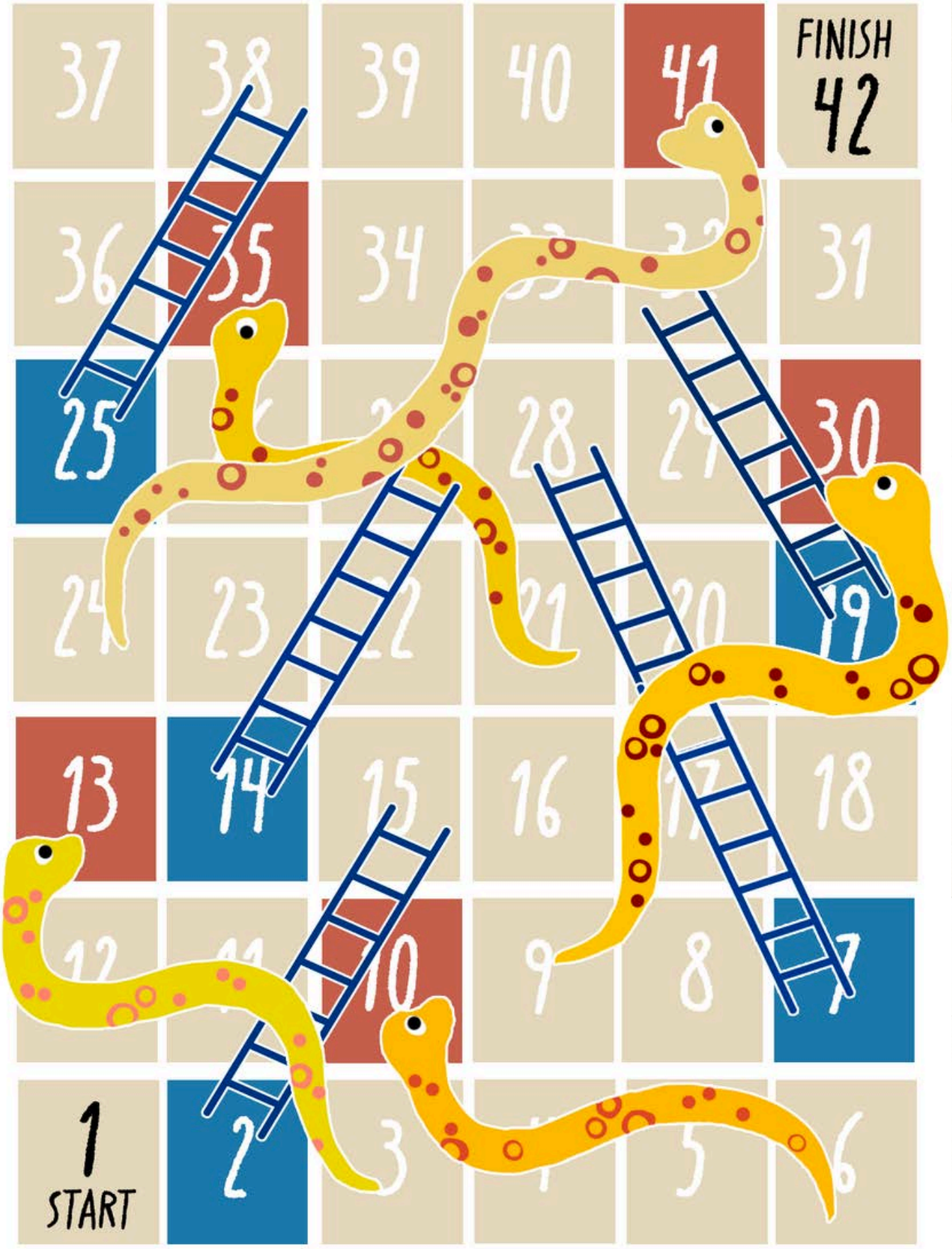
Snakes and Ladders

Sometimes, collaborating on a research project can feel like a game of snakes and ladders. You make progress in one area (the timescale works for both of you! A rate of pay has been agreed!) only for it to become clear that there was a misunderstanding (the funder wants something to show for the project next week – and actually, more work is going to be needed than was originally budgeted for).

We'd like to invite you to try playing the game yourself to experience how this can feel to an artist.

Throw the dice. Don’t just look at the numbers. There are shady squares around the numbers. If you land on any red or blue square, you take the consequences or the advantages.

May you land on ladders all the way and soar to the finish! But don’t despair if it’s snakes all the way…even that can lead to a good outcome for you.


FINISH
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16
15
14
13
12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
3
2
1
START

Square 2 Ladder	Congratulations! You've found an artist to work with.
Square 7 Ladder	You've agreed deadlines.
Square 14 Ladder	You're halfway through your project and your artist has produced a mock up of the final outcomes – tapestry/poetry/ceramics.
Square 19 Ladder	Final dates for joint submission and presentation agreed.
Square 25 Ladder	Your creative partner is paid on time, and you're now in the running for awards, tenure and speaking engagements. Tumultuous applause. Congratulations!!
Square 10 Snake	You found an artist to work with…but it might not be the right one. Your artist knows little of your research field, feels a little fish-out-of-water, but agrees to take on the commission.
Square 13 Snake	Have you checked where your practitioner lives and works? Does your budget include meetings and travel? 'Just a quick catch up' can take a half-day from a freelancer's working day. They will come to that meeting. You hold the purse strings, after all.
Square 30 Snake	BUT – are you checking in? This research is your job, but for a freelance artist it could be one of many jobs. Is the project going the way you thought it would?
Square 35 Snake	NEARLY complete! Really looking forward to seeing that multimedia visual expression of the research project. The artist is looking forward to you hearing the community choral piece they are working on… Crossed wires somewhere?
Square 41 Snake	The project now has a wonderful choral piece which, against the odds, is a success! Since its premiere, community choirs have started to sing it. Wonderful. Your work is finding new audiences. Those six months have flown past…but not for the artist, who is still waiting to be paid….

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Chapter 5

people

PEOPLE

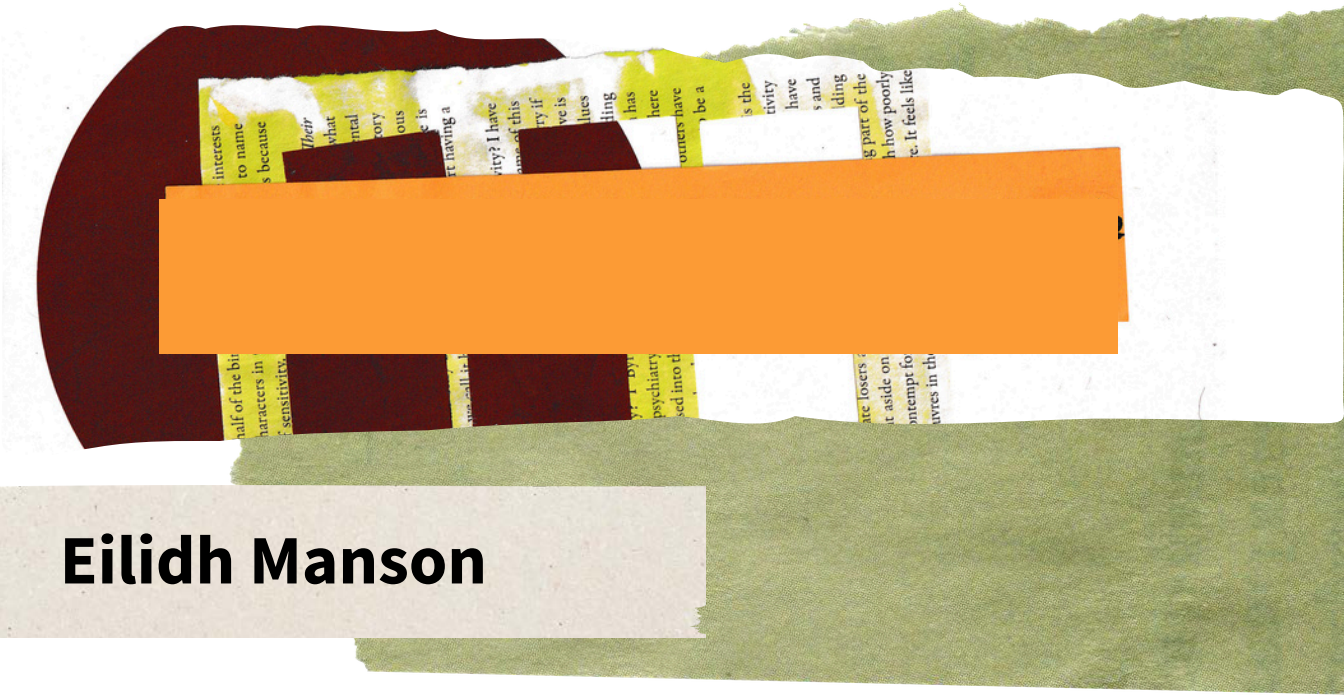
At the end of our in-person workshop, poet John Glenday wrote a poem summarising the day with the repeated refrain:

"You need to think about people"

A common experience shared throughout the day had been of researchers approaching and treating artists less as people and more as 'Job Description: Artist', with it frequently forgotten that every artist is a person with their own background, experiences and life contexts.

Even those researchers who pay the closest attention to the ethics of engaging with research participants in the context of their lived experiences can fail to do the same when it comes to the artists they are collaborating with. Where researchers take great care to consider potential harm or triggering trauma with research participants due to, for example, the topics or themes of the project, they must remember to devote just as much consideration to artists (and indeed anyone else, including fellow researchers) who are involved in the project.

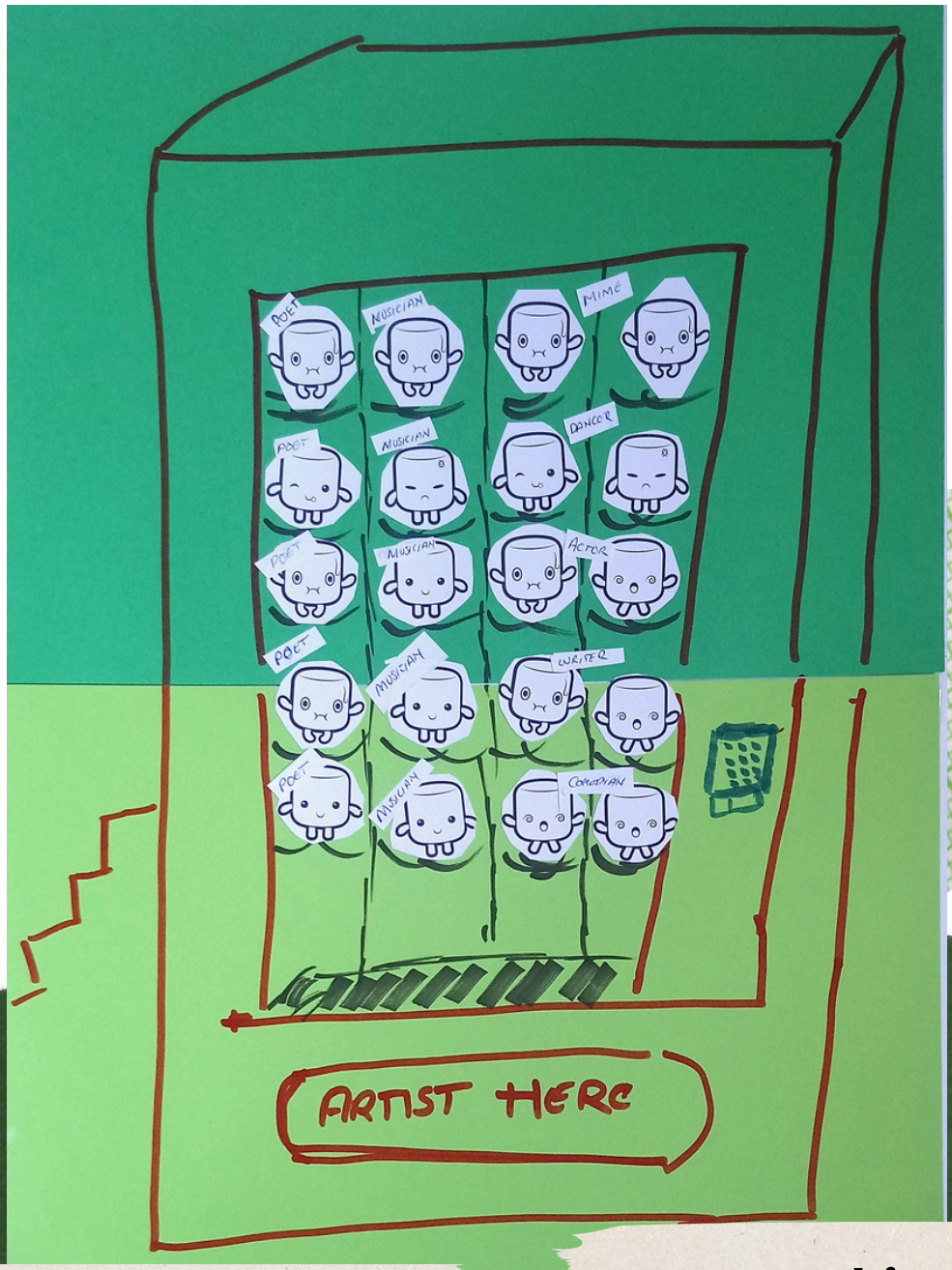
Artists are first and foremost people. While universities might compel their staff to engage with systems and processes through which administrative language requires them to ‘commission’ an artist to ‘render services’ agreed through formal quotes and contracts, you are going to be working with a person who is as complex as any other.



Eilidh Manson

Artists are also very far from homogenous, but we have frequently found that researchers can expect that any identified artist will be ready, willing, and able to work on any kind of project, using any kind of artistic language, and covering any kind of theme. For a long time in one of the workshops, the conversation coalesced around a phrase that had been written by one of the group to express how they had often felt that researchers had approached them:

This notion was carried through into one of the artistic works that expressed that when looking for and working with an artist, you are dealing with a person, not using some sort of artist vending machine!



Elsie Macdonald

Robin Grainger

Susan Morrison

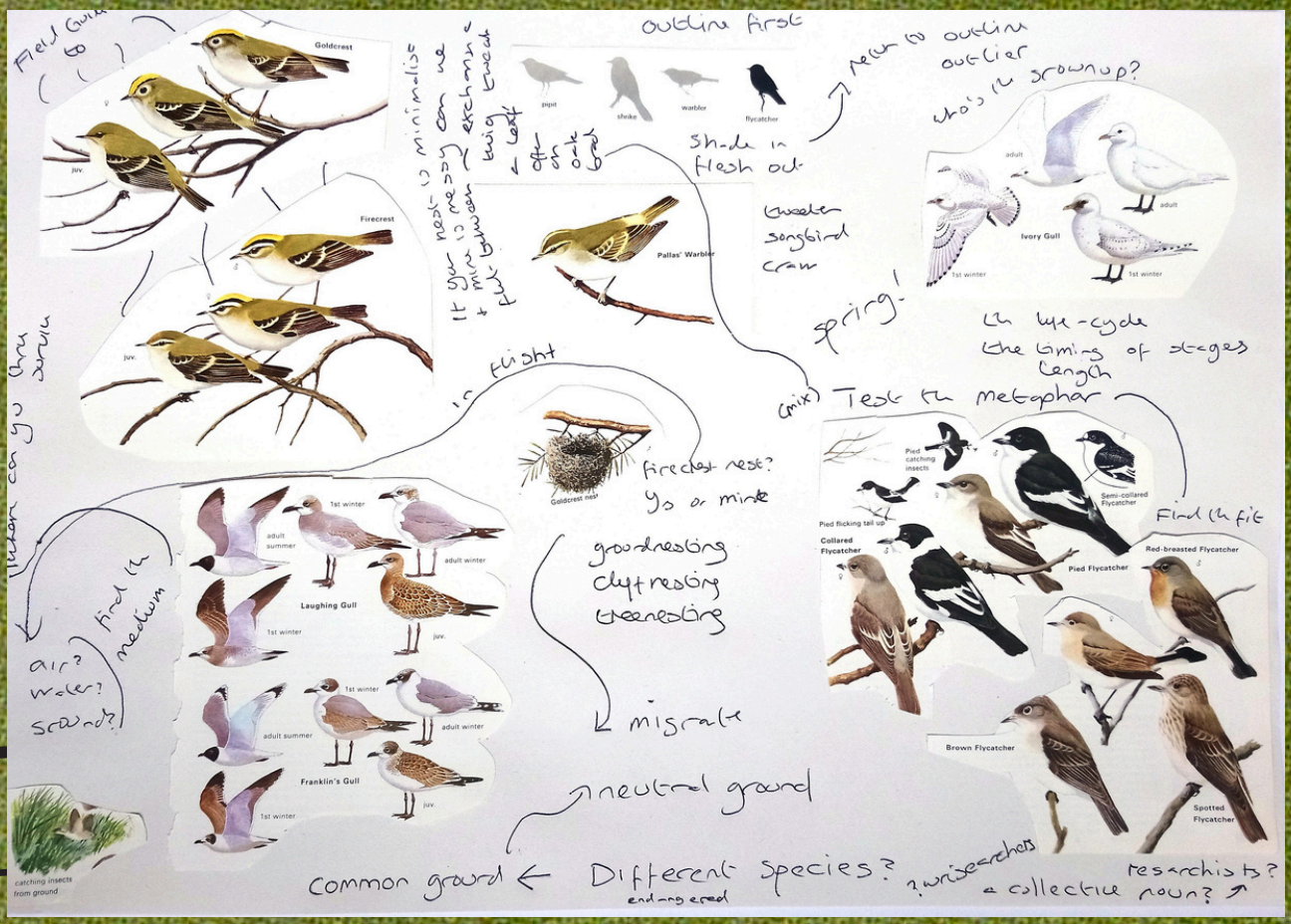
Assumptions about artists

"WE ARE MAGICIANS"

"ACADEMICS SOMETIMES THINK WE ARE EMPATHS"

An alternative way that researchers can work to counter this tendency is to be very clear what they are looking for before approaching artists, and to then communicate this very explicitly to potential collaborators. Here are some questions worth considering before approaching an artist, with space to add some of your own:

- What kinds of artistic methods and languages are you thinking of, and why?
- Who might the artist be working alongside on the project, and what might they need to know to determine whether they are a good fit?
- How fixed is the idea you have of what you want the artist to produce? Is there scope for them to bring their own ideas and creativity to the plan, or are there pre existing constraints?
- What kind of themes and topics does the project cover? If these themes explore anything which might hold the potential for trauma, how can you bring a trauma-informed approach to inviting an artist to collaborate?


outline first
Goldcrest
Firecrest
Pallas' Warbler
Laughing Gull
Franklin's Gull
Ivory Gull
Pied Flycatcher
Collared Flycatcher
Red-breasted Flycatcher
Brown Flycatcher
Spotted Flycatcher
Semi-collared Flycatcher
spring!
in flight
migrate
neutral ground
common ground
Different species?
researchists?

HELEN BODEN

Creative Exercise

The Colabinet

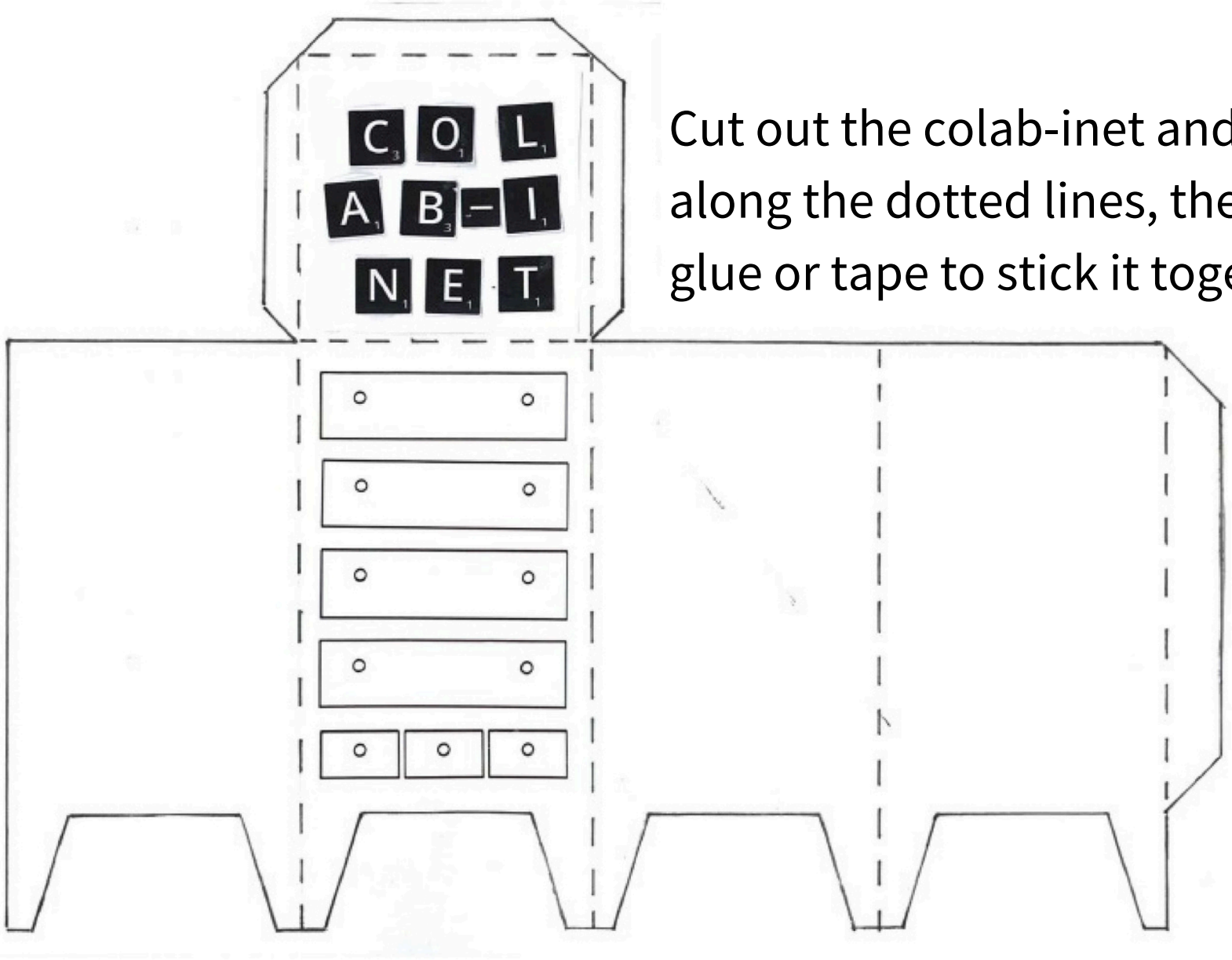
As a furniture-maker and sculptor, the form Jimmy likes to work with the most is the cabinet, a form of furniture designed to be the home for other, often precious, things.

During the workshop, they made a small cabinet on which they labelled drawers to house what seemed to be the most important and precious themes that we had worked with through the day, and called it, in an admittedly corny portmanteau, a 'colabinet' (with nine scrabble tiles which Jean had brought to the workshop fitting neatly on the top).

The process of designing and making an object with only limited spaces available for the storage of precious things can be a useful way of figuring out what things are the most important. A list can theoretically continue infinitely, but a cabinet can only contain a limited number of storage options, and if you want to keep all your precious things safe and intact, you can't just cram or throw them all in carelessly.

On the next page is a cut-out-and-keep template for your own 'Colab-inet', and if you are planning your own research project and thinking about collaborating with an artist, you might find it helpful to make the cabinet and jot down on the drawers some of the key things you might be looking for in an artist who might collaborate with you, beyond a job title or artistic speciality.

What things are important, precious, and will need to be kept safe if the project is to be successful and a positive experience for all concerned?



Cut out the colab-inet and fold along the dotted lines, then use glue or tape to stick it together.

Kate Fox

CASE STUDY

A stand up poet who shocked a room at the International Creative Research Methods Conference into silence by saying ‘I don’t work in academia or with academics anymore’. It was surprising, since Kate herself has a PhD, with considerable experience in the academic world, a period in her life she describes as ‘happy’.

We thought it worth taking the time to explore a little deeper.

Kate loved her years of learning, research, and teaching, but parts of academic life were far more problematic. The pressure put on early career researchers has increased in recent times. As well as teaching responsibilities, Kate felt pressure to be on committees, run modules, and keep up with the sheer volume of paperwork, admin, and emails. She moved back into a more creative role. At first, there was a great deal of contact with academics, and she described herself as:

‘A helpful liberator of caged academics’

She worked with academics to bring projects to life, but soon found that she was confronted by new barriers. The academics she worked with would have those doors opened, but they wouldn’t take full advantage of their freedom. She felt a constant surveillance of the work, with ‘eyes over shoulders’ and criticism coming in from people further up the chain of command. Even ‘tweaking’ the status quo could have repercussions. ‘Court jesters’ can only go so far before being politely put back in their boxes.

Her own experiences as a neurodivergent woman in this world were deeply unsatisfying. It seems surprising that modern places of teaching are so resistant to accommodating those who literally ‘think out of the box’. There were attempts to make her, and others like her, ‘fit in’ and a failure to accept the need for simple things such as rest time between workshops.

All of this led to some fairly toxic and uncomfortable experiences, and so Kate withdrew from the academic world. It's a source of some sadness to her. After all, these are people who are passionate about their subjects, as she is about her work, but the stultifying hands of conformity, surveillance and misconception all stifled that enthusiasm.

Kate still hopes to free those caged academics. Perhaps we can help.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Chapter 6

navigating each others worlds

NAVIGATION

Artists and researchers often inhabit very different worlds – different habitats, spaces, and timescales. Sometimes we're different species; sometimes we're the same. Some of us are hybrids, migrating between disciplines, blending artistic and research practices. But large academic institutions have structures that can be baffling to outsiders – schools, colleges, departments, all with different organisational structures.

Collaboration thrives when we take the time to understand these different worlds. Investing in relationships – not just tasks – helps build trust, deepen understanding, and set the foundation for creative, meaningful work. Taking the time to connect and embracing an ethics of care means that you can get to know an artist's unique story, skills, and priorities, understand their creative practice and working context, build trust to navigate challenges together, and clarify roles and expectations from the start.

It's tempting to dive straight into outputs and deliverables, but skipping the 'getting to know you' stage can lead to miscommunications and roadblocks later.

Some of our best work comes from having no set agenda – just time and space outside of offices to be together.

How and where we meet matters

For artists coming into a research team, particularly where methods and disciplines are new to them, it's important to craft a space and (funded) time for them to familiarise themselves with your methods and practices. Meeting a researcher before starting on the project also means artists have the opportunity to get any stress about that meeting, or about being in a new environment, out of the way before the project begins.

So, how do we welcome each other into our worlds in ways that foster trust and understanding?

It's worth thinking carefully about where and how you meet from the start. Because research projects are often initiated by universities, meetings tend to default to academic spaces. But this creates a power dynamic. The artist may feel like they need to 'fit in' and, let's be honest, university meeting rooms are rarely the most inspiring environments for creative thinking – a space for learning and education is very different from a creative space.

Instead of defaulting to the usual setting, consider being more amphibious. Just like frogs can move between land and water, adapting to these different environments, can we develop the ability to move between our different ways of speaking and working? The more we practice, the better we get at making those transitions smoothly.

Image of frog, text reads: Amphibious: Be open to being in different spaces. Like a frog, on land, in a pond, and in between.

ROSIE PRIEST

Trying out different spaces and ways of spending time together will shift the energy of your collaboration. Here are some strategies that have worked for us. We invite you to experiment, be curious, and see what works for you.

Strategies for building relationships

House swap

Visiting each other's 'natural habitats' can be a game-changer. Seeing an artist in their workspace, whether it's a studio, stage, or club, offers a new perspective on their practice. Likewise, inviting an artist into a research setting can help them understand your world.

Switching spaces shifts dynamics, sparks new ways of thinking, and unlocks fresh possibilities.

At the Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas, for example, they do a house swap – researchers come into the Stand Comedy Club in Edinburgh. It's a bit scary at first, stepping up to a mic in front of an audience, but you can see it change how they speak, how they stand, how they hold their bodies. They're completely different in that space than in a lecture hall.

Walk and talk

Sometimes, the best meetings happen outside. Walking (or wheeling) side by side opens up a different kind of conversation. Moving together shifts the energy, helping us to relax, focus, and communicate more openly. It's a welcome break from the desk, good for creative thinking, and often leads to unexpected insights.

Next time you need to meet, try taking it outside. Pick a park, a green space, or an interesting part of the city, and go on a meeting adventure.

Play, practice, and experiment with artistic practices

To really understand what the artists you work with can bring to research, don't just outsource the art-making completely – try it yourself! It is certainly the case that where people dedicate significant time, effort and energy to a particular set of practices, skills, techniques and reflections that they will develop deeper insights and wisdoms than those who don't, but you can always have a go at, or experiment with, the artform an artist uses to get a better understanding, and help you to be a better and more knowledgeable partner.

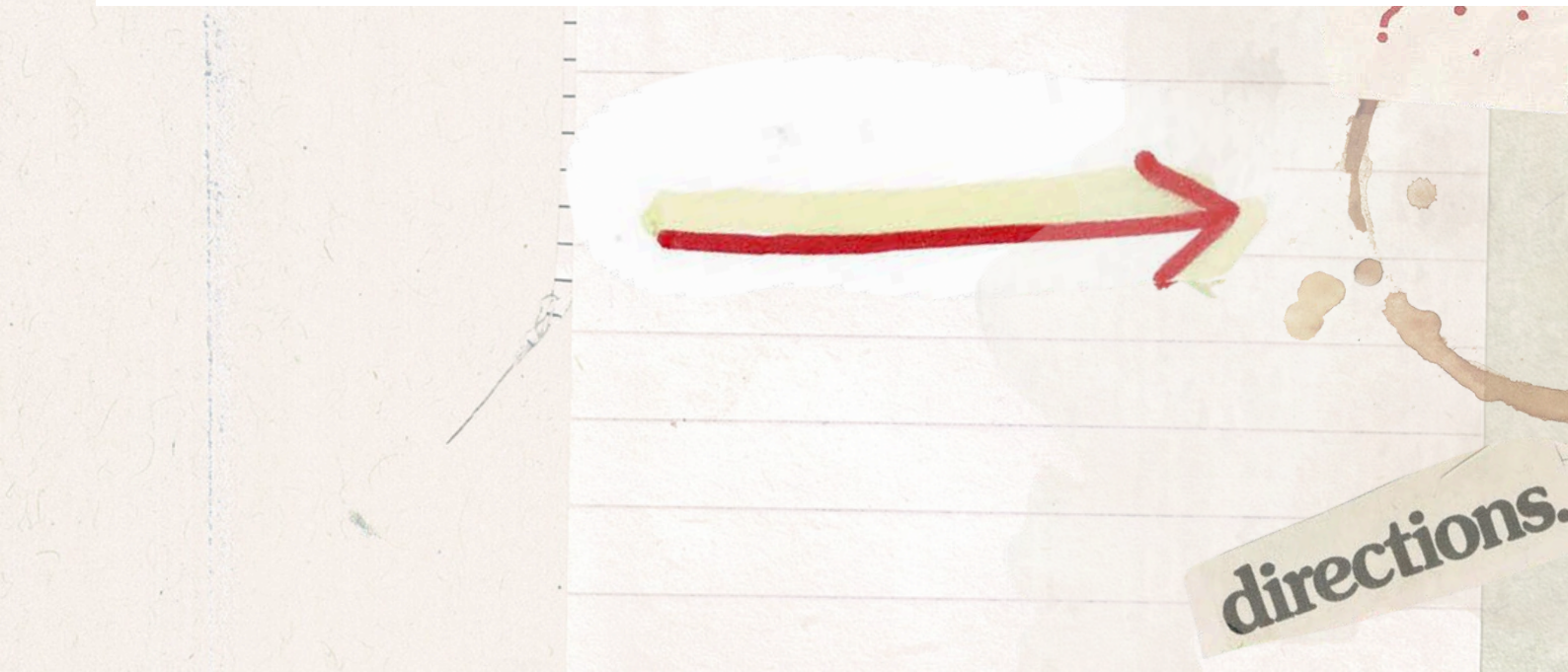
We would advocate for playing, practicing, and experimenting with any artistic practices, ideally with the artist you're collaborating with, before you apply it to your research (and particularly where you are using participatory research in which you expect your other partners and participants to do so). Investing some time into doing it yourself will bring a deeper understanding of the possibilities and also challenges of using an artistic practice, and may offer surprises and insights you wouldn't have come to otherwise. Spend time with these practices, and you may also find that they present themselves to you as methods you might use for producing knowledge in the future.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Chapter 7

communication

and ensuring a healthy ecosystem



COMMUNICATION

Collaboration between artists and researchers is a dynamic process and, as with any ecosystem, it thrives on clear, open, and thoughtful communication. Just as different species develop ways to signal and interact, artists and researchers bring their own ways of speaking, writing, and sharing ideas. Researchers and artists often operate in different linguistic worlds, shaped by their disciplines, training, and professional environments. Without realising it, we can easily slip into our own field's jargon, leaving collaborators confused or overwhelmed.

- For researchers: Do you use institutional acronyms, technical terms, or references to academic processes like REF, ethics committees, or peer review? (These might need explaining!)
- For artists: Are there artistic methods, theories, or references that might not be obvious to a researcher? (For example, what does 'socially engaged practice' mean to someone outside the arts?)
- For both parties: When introducing a new term, pause and check in. Can you rephrase it in everyday language? If you find yourself lost in the other person's terminology, don't be afraid to ask!

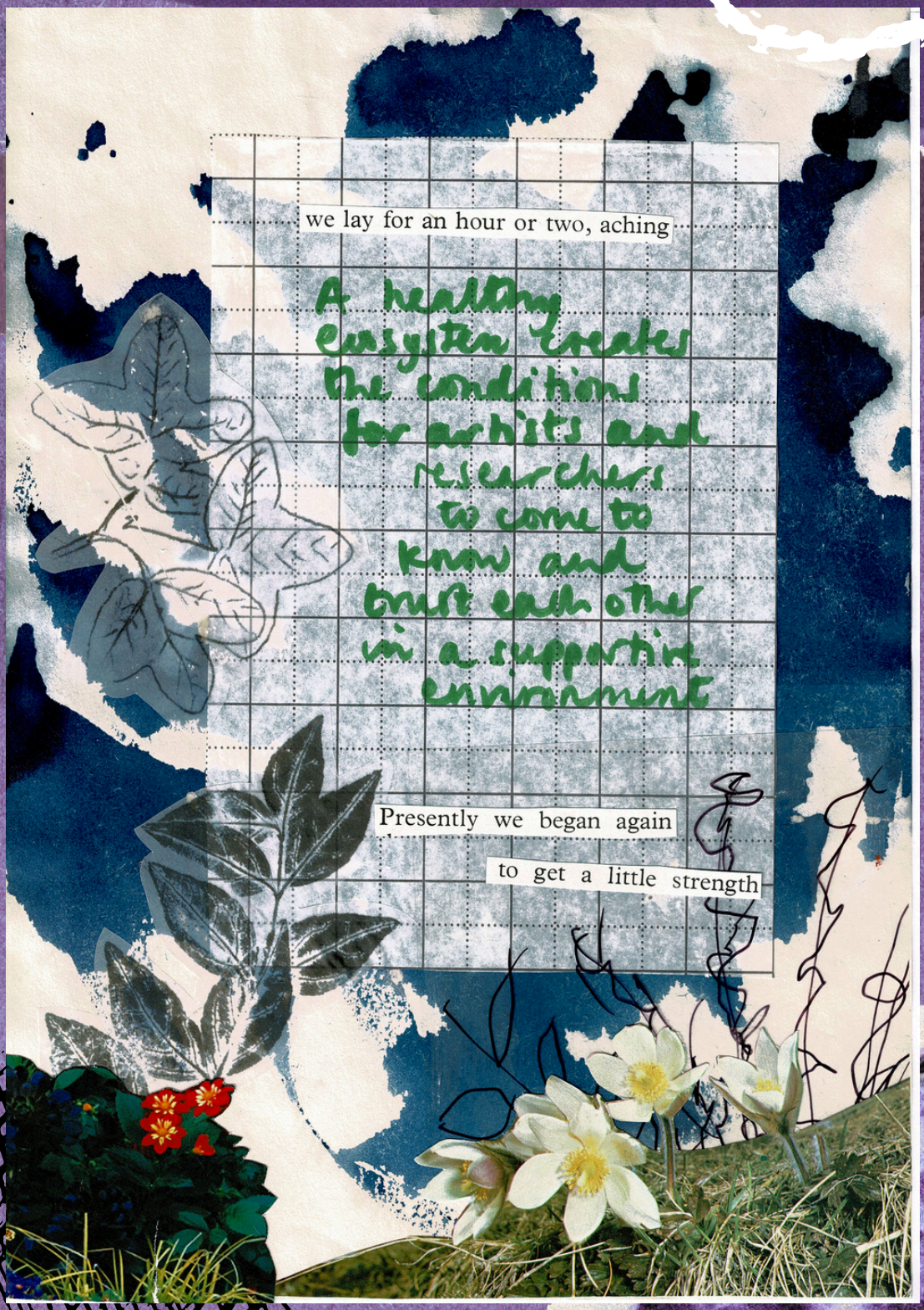
Making time to discuss how you'll communicate, being mindful of different languages and expectations, and ensuring that agreements are clear and fair all contribute to a healthy and creative working relationship. This section explores how to create an environment where communication is effective, respectful, and supportive, ensuring that all parties feel heard, valued, and able to do their best work.

By approaching communication with curiosity, care, and respect, we help create an ecosystem where both artists and researchers can flourish together.

Modes of communication

Different communication methods have different strengths, and finding the right balance can make a huge difference. It's worth discussing early on how, when, and through which channels you'll stay in touch. Here are some options to consider:

- Face-to-face meetings. Great for building relationships, brainstorming, and deep discussions. However, they require scheduling and travel, especially if your artist is not local, so they may not always be practical (or possible to fund within tight budgets).
- Online meetings (Zoom, Teams, etc.). More accessible and flexible, though it can be tiring to be on screen for a long meeting. The lack of physical presence can also sometimes make creative collaboration harder, making it more challenging to read non-verbal cues and communication.
- Emails: Useful for formal agreements, updates, and documentation. However, long email chains can be overwhelming, and tone can sometimes be misinterpreted.



Rhiannon Bull

- Messaging apps (WhatsApp, Slack, etc.). Can feel more immediate and casual, which may foster a friendly working relationship. However, they can also blur boundaries, and it's possible a freelance artist may not have a separate phone for work. As well as agreeing expectations around response times, you may also want to be clear on whether an artist is happy for you to contact them on their personal phone outside (or inside!) of working hours.

Whichever communication methods you agree on, it's helpful to establish boundaries early. Are weekends off-limits? What's the best way to flag urgent vs. non-urgent messages? Being clear about expectations helps avoid misunderstandings.

Formalising agreements: contracts and clarity

While trust and enthusiasm are vital, clear documentation helps collaborations run smoothly and equitably. Contracts, written agreements, or even just a shared document outlining expectations can clarify roles and responsibilities, ensure fair payment and timelines, set expectations for communication and decision-making, and address practical details like intellectual property and credits.

This isn't about bureaucracy – it's about creating a working environment that supports both researchers and artists. Contracts can feel formal, but they're there to protect everyone. We suggest approaching them as a shared tool to ensure a healthy and equitable working relationship.

Good communication extends beyond conversation; it includes making sure everything is documented in a way that's clear, fair, and accessible to both parties.


Select diverse groups
must be Respectful people
-Gender
-Race
-Economics
-Religion
-Disabilities...
Have some structure, but let the group grow as they want
Create a safe space for
BLA
SPONTANEITY
OFFER
compensation
$

Cinna

Things to consider when working with communities

- ☆ Deciding what is being researched together
- ☆ Who can + will make decisions?
- ☆ Who decides the outputs?
- ☆ Who is in the room?
  - ↳ What is needed to make it possible to be in the room?
    - Payment
    - Travel expenses
    - Child care
    - Food
    - After work meetings
- ☆ What training could be provided for every body to research or work together?
- ☆ How can the research process be healing?

Things to consider when working with communities

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- How can the research process be healing?

- What is at stake for communities + how does or could the research relate to lived experience?
- What methods of working do you use + what do the community want to use?
- How can you be as transparent as possible?
- How can you build in flexible time frames + outputs?
- Can you develop 'ways of working' that suit both communities + Researchers?
- Can you work with people that are already community embedded?
- How can you make sure people with lived experience can be involved?
  - ↳ Including → working class
    - → Marginalised

Bobby Sayers

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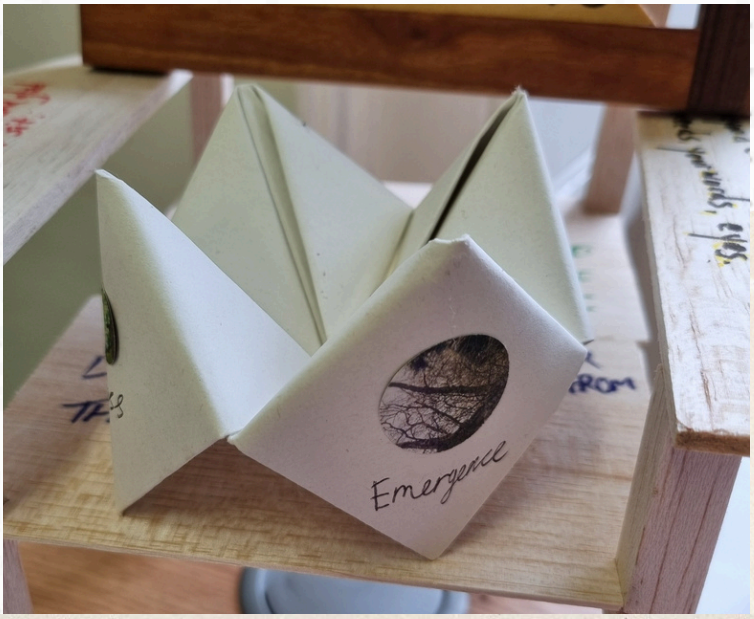
  - Including working class
  - Marginalised

Bobby Sayers

Creative Exercise

Fortune Teller

We invite you to make a paper fortune teller, like Josie did in our workshop, as a playful way to explore your hopes for your project — and how these might align with how you communicate with your artist collaborator.



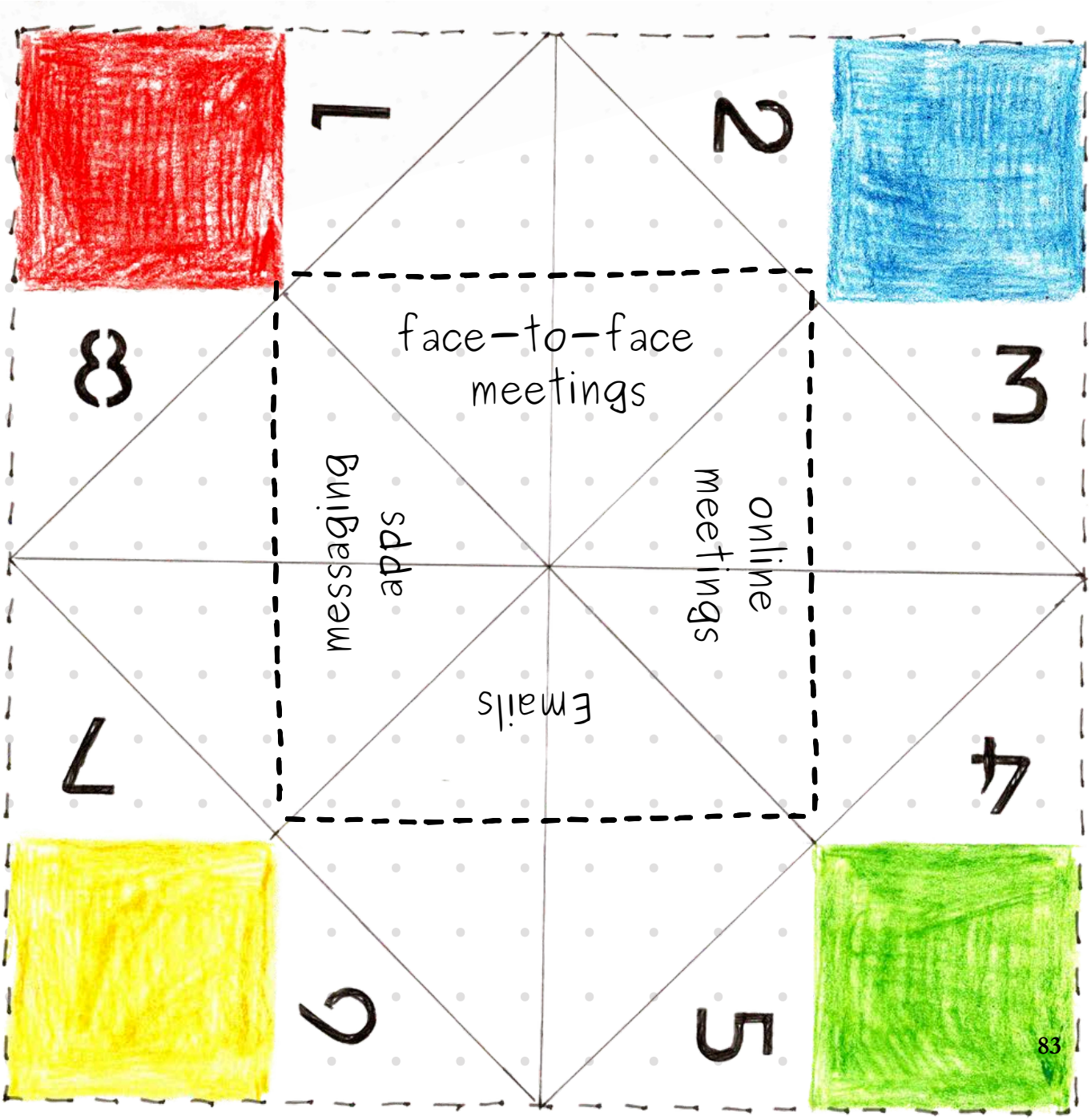
Josie Tothill

How to Make Your Fortune Teller

1. Print the template and cut it into a square.
2. Fold the paper in four to make quarters, with the design face down.
3. Unfold it.
4. Fold each corner into the centre so the points meet.
5. Fold into quarters again.
6. Flip the paper over.
7. Fold each corner into the centre again.
8. Fold into quarters one last time.
9. Slide your fingers under the flaps and gently press to
10. Open it into a fortune teller shape.

How to Use Your Fortune Teller

1. Pick a colour. Spell out the letters while pinching and pulling the fortune teller.
2. Choose one of the four numbers revealed. Move the fortune teller back and forth that number of times.
3. Pick another number. Open the flap to reveal one of the four modes of communication we introduced earlier in this chapter.
4. Take a moment to reflect: How does this mode of communication show up in your project? How might it help build clear, respectful or imaginative dialogue with your artist collaborator?
5. Jot down any thoughts, ideas or questions that come to mind. Keep going until you've explored all four communication modes.



Nicola Osborne

CASE STUDY

Nicola (they/them) is Manager of the University of Edinburgh's Institute for Design Informatics and was Programme Manager for Creative Informatics (2018-2024), which are only a few of their many hats. Nicola has an impressive track record of leading successful collaborations between academics and creative practitioners. They do it very well, and so it seemed a good idea to ask just how they do it, and why it sometimes doesn't work.

Chief amongst the skills Nicola deploys is simple listening. They take a lot of time and care over just what is being asked, expected and who will work with who. Nicola admits it's time-consuming, but it saves in the long run. Good groundwork creates purposeful collaboration.

Academics getting it wrong isn't entirely their fault. Too many have been trained in a culture of almost constant criticism, which can lead to insecurity, and a failure to explain what they really want.

They can hide that insecurity by using the language of academia, which just loves a big word. Also, it can be much harder to explain complex things simply. Nicola has often found themselves being a translator between a wordy researcher and a baffled creative, and diplomatically suggesting simpler and more accessible terminology. They also note that understanding the motivations and potential benefits for a creative professional is crucial as, unlike academics, they aren't typically paid for the time they spend developing these types of collaborations, so holding many meetings without a clear outcome or pathway too one can feel frustrating or even exploitative.

Nicola has noticed academics sometimes being slightly unwilling to acknowledge the wealth of experience and information that creative professionals can bring. They can misunderstand when someone with a creative practice suggests different ways of working or interpreting data or results. Academics also need to understand what the benefit for those creative collaborators might look like, and to ensure they feel motivated and acknowledged in the process.

Pre-preparation is the key. Nicola highlighted the need, particularly for early career researchers, to work with academics and/or professional services colleagues who had done this sort of collaboration before. This mentoring can pay massive dividends, because there are few guidebooks for successful collaborations.

Asking academics key questions about budgets, practices and outcomes even before the creative practitioners are consulted could save a lot of money and heartache. Checking in regularly with those creatives is crucial.

Naturally, we'd recommend everyone go and speak to Nicola, but they are a busy person, and so that's not on. Training and explaining could go a long way to improving the ways academics and creative professionals work together.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Chapter 8

art as knowledge

ART AS KNOWLEDGE

Our final thoughts relate to how we view the role of the artists we collaborate with. More specifically, we invite you to question the ways in which we judge and value the process and outputs that artists can bring to a research project.

Academic researchers being open to other modes of knowledge production is, in our experience, surprisingly rare, and often the ‘researcher way’ of approaching things can be taken for granted. Frequently, researchers have already worked out what they want to say and what they imagine the creative practitioner can/will produce, and there can be a reluctance to accept the intellectual input of the artist. Artists have valuable knowledge to share, but few channels exist in academia for us to share that knowledge in ways which are accessible or which fit with our ways of working and practices.

In academic conferences, for example, it is not uncommon for academics to present work produced by artists they have worked with – but these same conferences are often inaccessible to artists themselves, because they don’t get to find out about them, or they involve a cost (ticket fees, travel, and accommodation).

Those who do go often find they have to bend their work to fit into academic structures and languages like conference papers. Journal articles and chapters can present the same conundrum and, without institutional logins, most artists are paywalled out of this world anyway.

This exclusion of knowledge producers like artists robs academia of vast amounts of knowledge. What we would like to dwell with here, then, are the potential benefits you might find when you approach artists as not only interpreters or translators of research knowledge, but also as its producers – starting from the simple recognition that art is already knowledge, even if it tends not to be recognised as such.

Artists have different ways of exploring, seeing, thinking, processing, understanding and articulating the world around them. These may look very different to standard academic conventions of communicating through a particular written or spoken language, but these differences are part of what can be so valuable about bringing artistic perspectives and experiences to research.

Consider for a moment what an artist's process might look like. At times it may be hard to see or understand what we are doing. What may look like doodling, messing about, or not doing much at all will often be a space where an artist is doing knowledge production work in their own way. This process is often where the depthful work happens – where the experiments are taking place.

The frequent lack of thought given to art-as-knowledge can lead artists to assume that researchers don't want to share in their knowledge, and even grapple with imposter syndrome around the validity of the knowledge coming out of their creative practice and the insights around ethical ways of working that they might have.

Telling

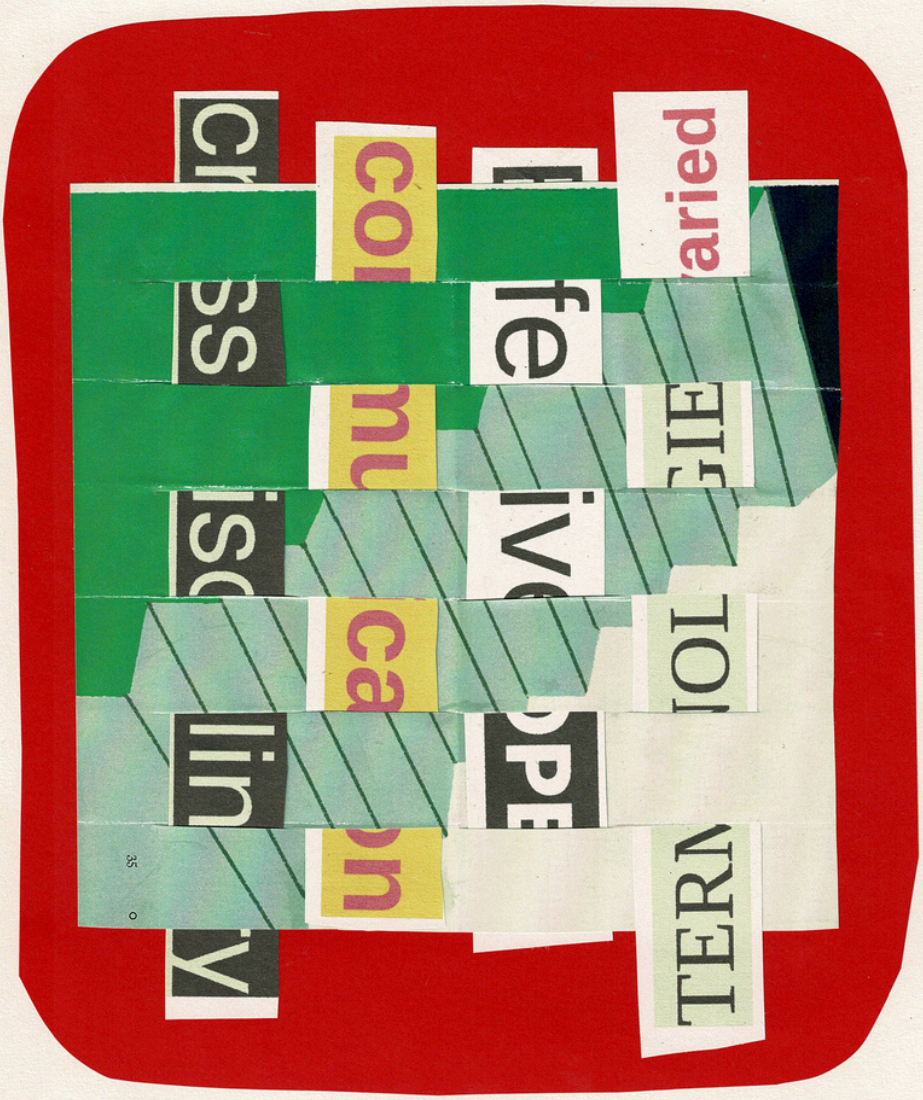
POWER

About this

Safe experimenting

one forgets
that it must be lived

Hector Macinnes



Ensure a democratic space
Respect the **rigour** *n* of the Artist's practice
Their skills, their experience

Catherine Cartwright

Jimmy Turner

If researchers don’t work to welcome artists’ inputs then they risk robbing themselves of opportunities to open up new transdisciplinary paths and develop guiding tools or compasses towards them. Artists’ insights and experiences are available to you, but you have to work to facilitate and encourage them to share.

So, we would encourage you to approach artists as (potential) producers of knowledge for your project, and to craft a space where they can (if they wish) bring their knowledge production skills into a productive relationship with yours, without compelling them to do things in the way that you think that ‘research’ requires.

Jean McEwan

CASE STUDY

Collage is an accessible creative process that involves cutting and rearranging images, text, and materials – often from discarded sources like newspapers, magazines, books or envelopes – to create new meanings, whether narrative or abstract. It's an intuitive, hands-on way of discovering and expressing ideas, whether working alone or collaboratively. Because it doesn't require previous artistic skills, collage is also a great tool for research, especially participatory projects. I often use collage in research with people who have lived experience of inequality, to create a space to document and express their perspectives in ways that words alone sometimes can't.

For example, in Changing Realities, a national research project working with parents and carers on low incomes, collages created by participants were made into collective zines (hand-made DIY magazines), which then became powerful visual statements that expressed both the challenges and complexities of participants' lived experiences and messages about what needed to change. Each decision about placement, layering, negative space, and added text or drawings contributed to a rich, personal expression that went beyond spoken or written language.

As well as being used as a tool to explore and communicate experiences and messages of research participants, collage can also be used as a reflective tool within project teams to encourage collaborative thinking and as a form of 'slow scholarship' for individual researchers to reflect on their own experiences.

Because of the powerful images and insights collage can produce, I'm often approached by researchers who want to use this practice in their own work. And the number one question I get? 'Where do you get your materials?'

Here, there can be an assumption that because collage is accessible, facilitating a collage-making process is simple – that researchers can 'have a go' as long as they have some nice materials. But the reality is that leading a collage process is a skilled practice. It's about more than just scissors, glue, and a pile of magazines. It involves:

- Thoughtful selection of source materials that are resonant and inclusive for the community you're working with
- Creating a space that is safe, inclusive, and trauma-informed
- Facilitating the process in a way that allows for deep engagement rather than just making visually impactful images

Thinking of using collage in your research?

Collage is a fantastic tool, but before diving in, consider these key points:

1. What's your intention?

- Are you using collage as a participatory research method, a reflective tool, or a way to communicate findings?
- How does it fit within your broader research aims?

2. Who is it for?

- If you're working with participants, think about accessibility. Will they feel comfortable with this method? Do they have the time, space, and materials they need?
- If you're using collage for personal or team reflection, consider how you'll document or revisit what emerges.

3. Be critical about your source materials

- The images and text available in mainstream media are not neutral; they often reflect dominant narratives and can misrepresent or stereotype marginalised communities. Be mindful when sourcing materials from newspapers, magazines, and advertising.
- Avoid simply handing out a pile of mainstream publications without considering the messages they carry. Instead, curate materials with intention, seeking out independent, diverse, and community-produced media where possible.
- If working with participants, offer a mix of materials, and encourage discussion around media representation. Who is visible? Who is missing? How do these images shape perceptions?
- Consider inviting participants to bring their own materials, if they feel comfortable, to ensure the collage process reflects their lived realities rather than external assumptions.

4. Holding space, not just handing out scissors

- Good facilitation is about creating an environment where people feel safe to explore and express themselves.
- Set clear expectations: is this an open-ended exploration, or will there be a specific outcome?
- Consider the emotional impact: collage can surface deep and personal themes. Be prepared to support participants if needed.

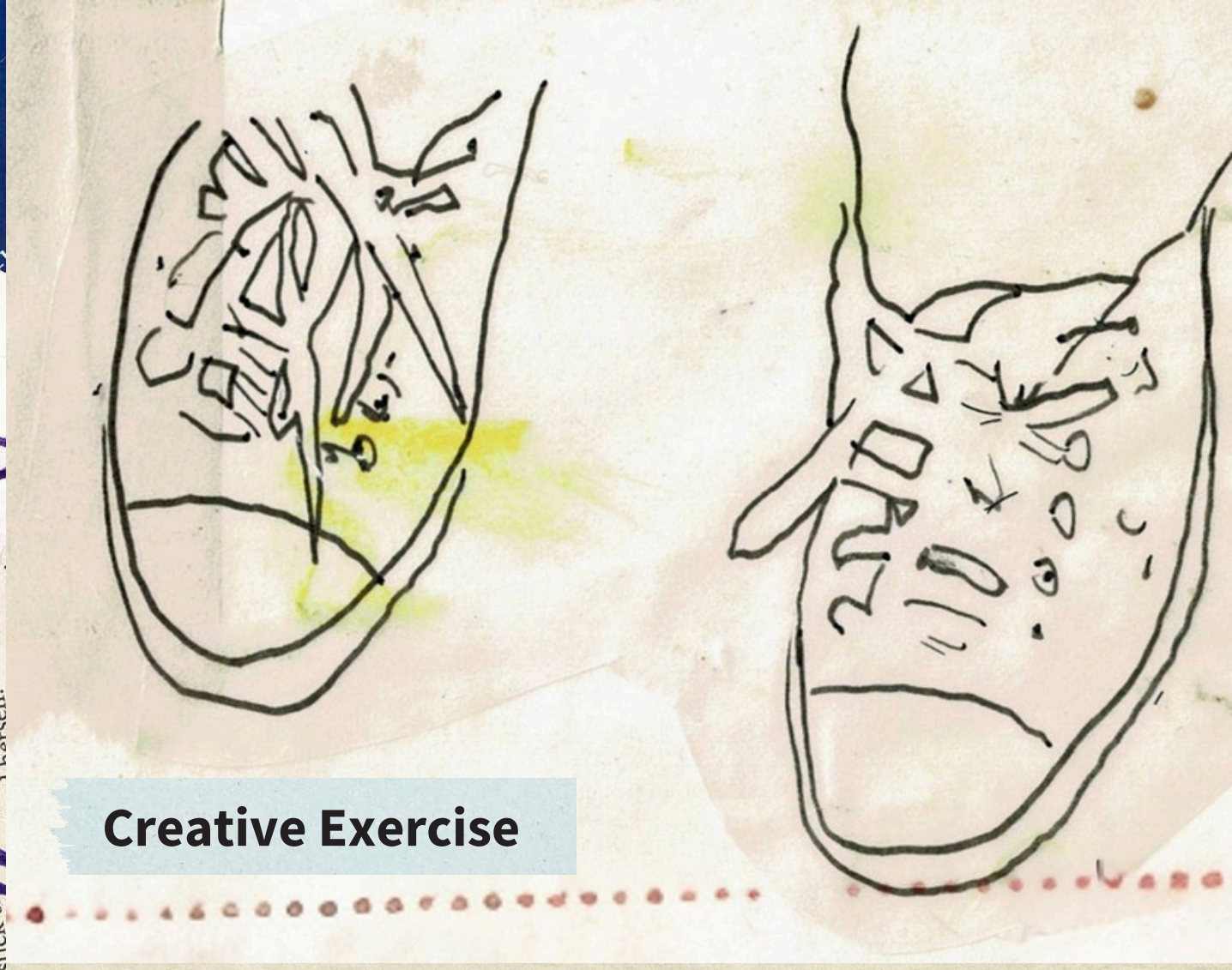
5. Time & process

- Collage takes time – don't rush it! Allow space for people to work, reflect, and share (if they want to).
- Think beyond the making. What happens to the collages afterward? Will they be shared, archived, exhibited, or remain private?

6. Be open to surprise

- Collage is unpredictable – that's part of its power. Try not to impose rigid expectations on what should emerge.
- Stay flexible and responsive to what participants (or you) discover in the process.

By being thoughtful about materials and facilitation, you can ensure collage is not just an enjoyable creative exercise, but an empowering and critical tool for knowledge production.



Creative Exercise

scrapbooking

In the last couple of ‘scrapbook’ pages of this section, we would like to invite you to consider what kinds of knowledge artists have produced about your research field and themes and note them down.

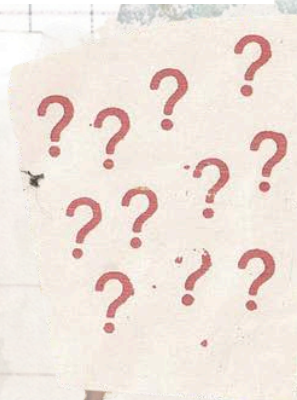
Feel free to use some of the collaging techniques outlined by Jean above to see for yourself what new knowledge this creative practice can bring.

Could an artist who collaborated with you on your research bring knowledge that would enrich and enhance the project?

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Chapter 9

roads travelled

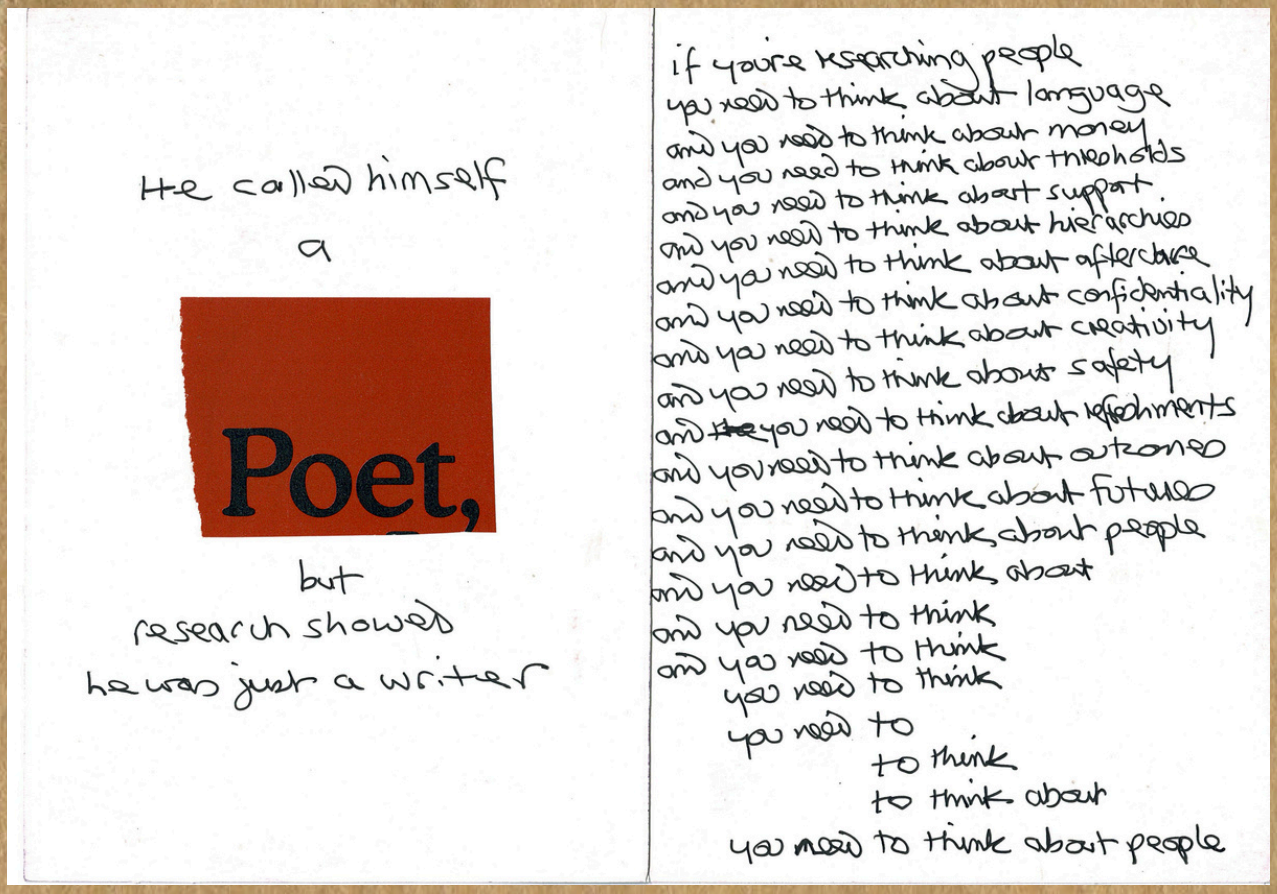


ROADS TRAVELLED

Before we conclude, we'd like to offer you a space to pause and take in the view. First, take a moment to free write on how you're feeling about everything you've been reading and creating so far. What has stood out to you most? Were there things that came up over and over again? Did anything surprise you? Do you have an inkling of what you might like to do differently in future?

We'd recommend setting a timer for 2 minutes and writing on whatever comes to mind, as fast as you can.

The following poem was written by John Glenday, who participated in our in-person workshop, and which we think beautifully encapsulates the discussions and creative work the group had been working on.



Following in John's footsteps, we'd like to invite you to finish working through this field guide by creating a poem of your own. Writing creatively – just like working in a visual medium – can help you think differently, and poetry in particular can be helpful for distilling the essence of what you want to say.

Fill in the template overleaf (based on the structure of John's poem) to express your own thoughts and experiences about working with artists.

He called himself
a

Poet,

but
research showed
he was just a writer

if you're researching people
you need to think about language
and you need to think about money
and you need to think about thresholds
and you need to think about support
and you need to think about hierarchies
and you need to think about aftercare
and you need to think about confidentiality
and you need to think about safety
and you need to think about refreshments
and you need to think about outcomes
and you need to think about futures
and you need to think about people
and you need to think about
and you need to think
and you need to think
you need to think
you need to
to think
to think about
you need to think about people

In keeping with the ethos of this field guide, don't feel that you have to follow this template exactly if you don't want to. Create a structure of your own, or don't follow any structure at all. Cut out words from a newspaper or magazine (or the earlier pages of this field guide) and collage your poem. Circle some words in another piece of writing at random and see whether they help you frame what you're trying to say differently. But try to get something down on paper that comes close to capturing what you're thinking and feeling right now.

you need to think about
and you need to think about
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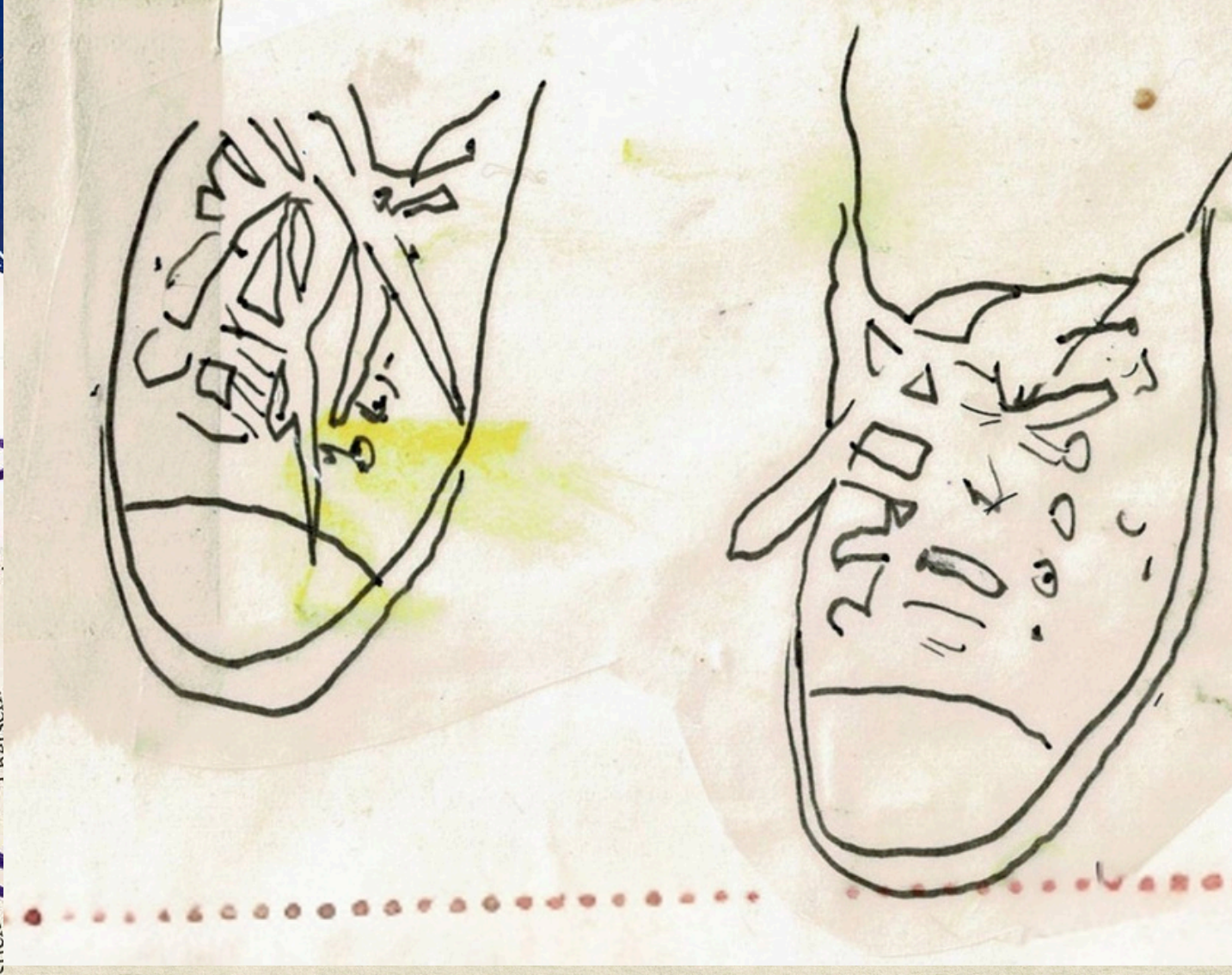


Once you've written your poem, it might be interesting to compare this to the map you created at the beginning of this field guide.

What has changed for you as you've navigated your way through this information on artist-researcher collaborations? Do you feel like your journey has continued as a result of creatively engaging with our field guide?

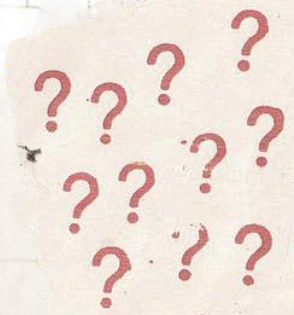

"THANK YOU FOR SEEING US"
navigating each others' worlds
AVERAGE DAY
A Two-Way Street
Process
EXPERIENCE
Our
Making
directions.
develop
WORRY. HIDE HERE

JOHN SCOTT

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Chapter 10

end notes



END NOTES

Acknowledgements

We hope that you have found using this field guide to be an interesting, helpful and fun way to think about artist-researcher collaborations, and perhaps even that it has sparked some ideas and reflections for your own projects. The process of making this field guide has been very positive for us, helping to clarify our understandings of our own experiences and expand our collective wisdom on ways of being and working together.

This experience would not have been possible without the help and support of many other people, most particularly:

- Our comrades in the Binks Hub at the University of Edinburgh, who supported and encouraged us, and, very practically, provided the funding that enabled us to pay everyone who attended the workshops and the members of our team who are not salaried employees at the University of Edinburgh. This also made it possible for us to travel to Manchester for the International Creative Research Methods Conference 2024.

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- Kirstin Lamb, for her generous and thorough readings of earlier drafts of the field guide, and whose administrative expertise and support made such a difference – without her, this would have been much more of an ordeal
- Nel Coleman, for their equally generous and thorough readings of the earlier drafts of the field guide! And for all their work in helping us improve the accessibility of the field guide.
- The folk who attended our workshop at the International Creative Research Methods Conference and participated in the pilot of some of the sections and creative exercises included in this field guide (all of which improved as a result). Their enthusiasm, wisdom, and encouragement helped us immensely at a critical moment in the process.
- The team at Edinburgh Diamond for agreeing to publish the field guide. Their championing of non-traditional academic outputs is priceless for the kind of work we do.
- The countless artists, researchers, and artist/researchers who we have spoken to about the project, and who were unfailingly supportive.
- You, for reading, doodling, cutting, gluing and generally making your copy of the field guide your own!

In the interest of being completely transparent about our own processes in our attempts at collaborating on this field guide, we also want to acknowledge a couple of mistakes made along the way.

When inviting artists to participate in the workshops, we drew upon our existing networks and contacts, and we were very concerned to ensure diversity. We knew that artists of colour would be participating in the workshops, and that one of our team is mixed race, but we failed to properly consider the balance across the two workshops.

It took one of the artists present at the first, in-person, workshop to point out to us that the eight artists present with us that day were all white. We knew that the online workshop would be different, but that doesn't detract from the fact that these things matter, and we should have been more thoughtful when we planned these sessions.

Although we did budget to be able to pay the three non-University of Edinburgh salaried members of our team for their work on the field guide, they have all certainly worked more hours than they were compensated for. It is definitely difficult to project and plan accurate budgeted hours at the beginning of a project, but a lesson that we learned, and we hope that you heed in your own planning, is that we should have planned for more hours from the beginning.

Finally, as mentioned earlier in the field guide, we are aware that one of the artists who participated in the workshops had to wait longer than was acceptable for their payment to come through from the university.

To get in touch with any further questions, clarifications, or comments on this field guide, please contact Jimmy at the Binks Hub on jimmy.turner@ed.ac.uk. Contact details for the other editors can be found at the end of the field guide.

Other useful encounters

We chose to use the form and ethos of a field guide to present our contribution to the terrain of artist-researcher collaborations, and we chose to write as artists to an audience of academic researchers. There are numerous other ways that this topic can be approached, however, and while this list is very far from exhaustive, here are some examples of outputs produced by some of us from our previous artist-researcher collaborations, along with some contributions made by others which we have found useful, and which can offer perspectives which this field guide doesn't.

In-depth explorations of research projects some of us have worked on:

Masculinities, Art, and Potencies from the Peripheries (https://www.iri.puc-rio.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/cartilhaGG-en.pdf) is an excellent account of drawing together academics, artists, NGOs and communities in collaborative research through an artistic dance residency in Rio de Janeiro. It was produced by NGO partners in a UKRI GCRF project which Jimmy and Tainá worked on.

Jean and Hector have very positively experienced being democratically involved as artists in Changing Realities, a national research project with the University of Glasgow in collaboration with Child Poverty Action Group. Collective zines co-produced with project participants and researchers, which you can see here https://changingrealities.org/zines, are examples of the kinds of outputs that such positive collaborations with artists can produce.

Josie, Federica and Bobby are members of the Community Wellbeing Collective (CWC) in Wester Hailes in Edinburgh. The CWC collaborated with knowledge exchange officer Dr Iona Beange and with data scientists from the University of Edinburgh on the research project ‘Mental Health: Imagining Beyond’ funded by Research Data Scotland. As one of the outcomes of this collaboration the CWC published in 2024 the zine Research as a Healing Practice: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dls--mOiPevsUOkcWQbKil-L63l-zhjg/view
a resource which explores their artistic community-led collaboration on mental health data.

Resources on artist-researcher collaborations that others have produced:

The Collaborative Poetics Resource Pack: https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/collaborativepoetics/resources/ is a fascinating resource produced by community groups, practitioners, artists, and academics for community groups, practitioners, artists, and academics, and provides super-detailed insights on how to work collaboratively as what they call a ‘research collective’.

From the formal-feeling end of the spectrum, The Healthcare Improvement Studies (THIS) Institute at the University of Cambridge have produced Arts-based engagement with research: A guide for community groups, practitioners and researchers (https://www.thisinstitute.cam.ac.uk/research/outputs/arts-based-engagement-a-guide-for-community-groups-artists-and-researchers/), a great resource with some very interesting case studies.

What Works Artist and Researcher Collaborations: https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/resources/guide/what-works-guide-artist-and-researcher-collaborations is another more formal resource, this time produced by National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, which considers how researchers and artists can best work together in public engagement with research.

If you are interested in collaborating with artists but struggling to work out what they might be able to bring to your research, then The Role of the Artist in Society: https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVIresources/research-digest-the-role-of-the-artist-in-society/ might be just the resource you need. Produced by the Centre for Cultural Value at the University of Leeds, reading it is a great way to start to expand your range of possibilities.

The 2023 Structurally F-cked report: https://www.a-n.co.uk/research/structurally-f-cked/ published by Industria, a-n, and The Artists Information Company, offers further information on artists' pay and working conditions.

Our expertise and experience as artists and researchers is mostly orientated around participatory social research, so if you are interested in more 'science-y' insights and experiences we think that Science/Art Collaborations: A Practical Guide: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/hawkes-institute/public-engagement/past-public-engagement-projects from the Wellcome/EPSRC Centre for Interventional and Surgical Science (WEISS) at University College London (UCL) looks like a good starting point.

Our co-authors

Helen Boden is a poet, socially engaged artist, walking artist and former lecturer in English and Scottish Literature. Her publications include A Landscape To Figure In (red Squirrel Press, 2021) and Braid (ArtWalk Press, 2025).
www.helenbodenliteraryarts.com

Rhiannon Bull is a writer of fiction and narrative non-fiction, an illustrator, and a painter based in Edinburgh. Rhiannon is currently undertaking PhD research at the University of Glasgow using creative writing to explore climate emotions in Scotland.
www.rhiannonbull.com

Jenny Capon is an illustrator and graphic recorder based in Edinburgh. She has a socially engaged practice, specialising in creating visual minutes. These are an illustrated record of conversations, meetings or events, helping to present complex information and ideas in an engaging way.
www.jennycapondraws.com

Catherine Cartwright is a visual artist. She's interested in how we learn about and engage with difficult knowledge, to empower rather than overwhelm. Her PhD (2024) research focused on her community art practice and asked how artists can work in safe ways with people impacted by trauma.
www.catherinecartwright.co.uk

Federica Cologna is an artist, a member of the Community Wellbeing Collective and PhD researcher at the University of Edinburgh whose research explores the intersection of socially engaged art, feminist theory and political transformation. She works across different forms – from editorial projects, installations, and creative/critical writing to workshops and performances.

Tainá da Rocha Val (Cinna) is a Brazilian multi-platform artist, researcher and educator. Her work is rooted in peripheric culture and knowledge. She has been involved in social projects, facilitating arts, language and gender workshops since 2015. She became an immigrant in 2020, expanding her reach to other countries.

Susie Rose Dalton is an artist, researcher, and facilitator. She is from Belfast and currently lives on the west coast of Scotland.

Kate Fox is a stand-up poet, spoken word artist and broadcaster. She is a regular contributor to Radio 4's spoken word cabaret “The Verb”, has made two comedy series for Radio 4, been Poet in Residence for the Glastonbury Festival and the Great North Run and completed a PhD in stand-up comedy. She is the author of “Where There’s Muck There’s Bras: True Stories of the North of England’s Women” published by Harper North, and poetry collections including "On Sycamore Gap" (Harper North, 2024), "Bigger On the Inside" (Smokestack Books, 2024) and "The Oscillations" (Nine Arches Press, 2021). She is also a neurodivergent advocate whose latest show “Bigger on the Inside" explores neurodiversity through the lens of Doctor Who.

John Glenday is the author of four collections. His Selected Poems was published by Picador in 2020. He currently collaborates with the Art Angel charity to run a weekly Walking and Writing Group for men with mental health issues in Dundee.

Robin Grainger is an award-nominated standup comedian, actor and writer. He has written and performed sold out solo shows at the Edinburgh fringe festival, garnering five-star reviews and performs standup around the world. Robin also likes ice cream and has too many pairs of shoes.

Brian Hartley

Elsie MacDonald is a Dundee-born emerging alt-folk singer-songwriter calling Edinburgh home. Creating connection at their live shows, Elsie is well known in the Edinburgh scene and beyond for their conversational and emotionally impactful performance style, creating intimacy with audiences in shared spaces - https://www.elsiemacdonald.co.uk/

Hector MacInnes is a sound artist, researcher and producer. Originally from the Highlands and now based in Gloucestershire, his work explores situated knowledge through sound and community, within imaginaries of the rural and remote. He is a PhD candidate at CRiSAP and a participation producer for GL4 CIC. www.hectormacinnes.com

Eilidh Manson is a North Lanarkshire based visual artist/tutor working across various organizations and independently to promote accessible creative practices for all. This includes establishing Project 42 community group and embarking on national project Reasonable Adjustments. More information on Instagram through @aylesmakes and @project42nl

Moral Masuoka is a curator and producer working with Blue Robotics to support art that connects people to the sea. She focuses on visual artists, writers, and filmmakers interested in marine environments and coastal communities. She is particularly interested in projects that bring together marine technology, art, and academic research.

Jean McEwan is a visual and participatory artist who has worked with communities and research projects for 20+ years. Based near Bradford but also working nationally, she facilitates collage, zine-making and creative journaling as means to explore meaning, stories and messages with people.

Susan Morrison has been an MC at The Stand Comedy club since the day it opened, and she has taken to the stage in clubs from Bournemouth to Inverness. She is a writer, broadcaster and comedian with two grown-up children and a very patient husband. She is passionate about creating new ways for researchers and academics to bring their work to the public through her work with the Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas, the Bright Club and The Provocateurs. In 2025, Napier University celebrated her achievements in public engagement by granting her an honorary doctorate.

Nicola Osborne (they/them) manages the Institute for Design Informatics at the University of Edinburgh, working with researchers and those in the creative industries, on major projects that span data, technology, AI, and creativity. They particularly focus on how innovative ideas can be more ethically, inclusively, and fairly developed into new products, services and creative work.

Rosie Aspinall Priest is an artist and researcher with a PhD on the value of collaborative visual art methods. A Shape × BALTIC and British Ceramics Biennale mentee, they create sculpture, sound, and participatory work. Rosie is founder of the fictional but deeply sincere Space Celebration Organisation, developing participatory ways of celebrating the cosmos.

Bobby Sayers (Essex, UK) is a Teaching Fellow in Fine Art (ECA - UoE), is a queer working class socially engaged artist. His practice and research focuses on class, belonging, queerness, value, masculinity, infrastructure as care and socially engaged art, through durational community-embedded practice, poetry, performance and sculpture that extend beyond institutions. Sayers holds an MFA from Piet Zwart Institute, is co-initiator of the Community Wellbeing Collective (EAF 2022), and previously worked as producer for Jeanne van Heeswijk and lecturer of Social Practice at Willem de Kooning Academy. Sayers has exhibited internationally and established residencies/public art projects across Scotland and Europe.

John Scott

Josie Tothill‘s work can take many forms including; sculpture, film, workshops, public conversations, community and political organising, and events. Through poetic approaches to meeting one another and tracing the roots of our struggles and desires, she invites us to imagine possible futures and take collective action, bringing them to life.

Jimmy Turner is a woodworker, sculptor, curator and anthropologist who works as a researcher for the Binks Hub at the University of Edinburgh. They concentrate on designing and developing research and arts projects with community organisations, through which community members can explore their curiosities and priorities through art and creativity.

Lisa Williams

If you have added to the field guide through your contributions, congratulations – you are now a co-author of your own edition!

Your Name:

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Your Bio:

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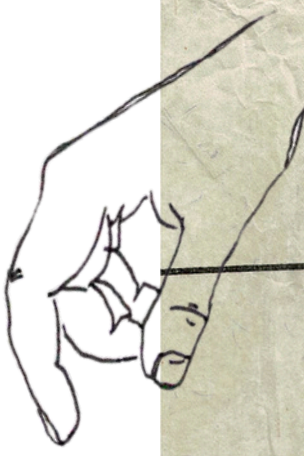
A note on how we published this document: Publications written by and for academics more often than not tend to end up being expensive and/or inaccessible to people without university library access. We decided not to attempt to publish this book through a commercial publisher as it is very important for us to ensure that it is free and accessible for anyone who might be interested, including, most pertinently, freelance artists. Instead we opted to publish through the University of Edinburgh's 'Edinburgh Diamond' service, which is completely Open Access, to ensure that anyone with an internet connection can access and download it.



Get in touch

If you still have questions about this field guide, you can contact the editors:

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Design work

The visual concept and design work for this field guide was a creative collaboration between Jean McEwan and Rhiannon Bull. To see more of Rhiannon's work, please visit **www.rhiannonbull.com**

To follow Jean's work, visit her page at Bluesky at **jeanmmcewanartist.blu.ski**

Design and editorial support for reader accessibility provided by Nel Coleman

The Binks Hub

This project forms part of a wider programme of work on creative and participatory research methods at the Binks Hub, a research network at the University of Edinburgh. To learn more, please visit the website: **www.binks-hub.ed.ac.uk**

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