

Kate Zeller on
A Lived Practice



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IN THIS MONTH'S CREATE NEWS WE INVITED CHICAGO-BASED CURATOR KATE ZELLER TO WRITE ABOUT A LIVED PRACTICE WHICH SHE CO-CURATED AT THE SULLIVAN GALLERIES WITH CURATOR, WRITER, EDUCATOR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF EXHIBITIONS MARY JANE JACOB. A LIVED PRACTICE WAS A SERIES OF EXHIBITIONS, PROGRAMMES SYMPOSIA AND PUBLICATIONS WHICH EXPLORED THE HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY FIELD OF SOCIAL PRACTICE IN CHICAGO.

From the beginning, connecting to Chicago's remarkable history of influential activists and artists working towards social justice and reform was a major tenant of our approach to A Lived Practice. The cornerstone of which was the work of John Dewey and Jane Addams who, at the turn of the century, shaped notions of embodied citizenship that extended far beyond Chicago and continue to remain relevant today. Personally, I was drawn to the history of Dewey's Laboratory School, founded here in 1896 at the University of Chicago, where many of his theories of the conscious development of the individual played out in practice.

I encountered profound, informative, and heartfelt primary accounts from the first Lab School teachers who, alongside Dewey, shaped its experimental curriculum. Their understandings and analysis of the school's aims and the implementation of its pilot plan had — and continue to have — resonances for me with the why and how of A Lived Practice's approach to the discourse of social practice. I was inspired by their deep and thoughtful questioning of what it can mean to cultivate one's relationship to and role within one's environment — self, family, community, and society — in all the complexity that was and is the modern world. I feel that the way this theory was enacted at the Lab School offers a perspective in which to consider our curatorial process as it came to be played out in the many programs developed as part of A Lived Practice. We also used this mode in approaching the exhibition component of the project, A Proximity of Consciousness: Art and Social Action, which began with invitations to 10 artists whose long-term practices deeply engaged critical social issues and were embedded in various Chicago histories. Artists included, Michael Rakowitz, building on his ongoing project and continued collaboration with Chicago's community of Iraqi émigrés and US veterans of the Iraq War, Pablo Helguera's Addams-Dewey Gymnasium which explored possible intellectual and historical roots of socially engaged practice, enacting curriculum from the turn-of-the-century and presenting new experimental actions in response. And Temporary Services' Publishing

Cover Image:

Participants at Lucky Pierre's *Final Meals*, program at the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, 2015. Photo: Emerson Granillo. Courtesy of A Lived Practice.

Clearing House, a fully-functioning print shop where the artists produced many new booklets during the show, inviting a range of guest authors with a particular interest in presenting voices from marginalized and disadvantaged populations, and those who represent or articulate narratives counter to dominant cultural norms.

Of course, this is only to name a few of the ambitious works presented in the exhibition, and it merely begins to touch on the complexity and depth involved in each of the artists' projects. As curators we realized we did not need to author our programs, but could take care to help further those practices already deeply engaged in a line of questioning and make them part of the process. We are lucky to have in this city numerous artists, activists and organizations already engaged in influential work challenging the status quo. Present in our process was a great sense of respect for these efforts, not seeking to make an exhibition version of them, but to consider if an exhibition could be a resource for their causes. One such example was Final Meals.

On a frigid Chicago October evening over 70 of us gathered in the historic dining hall of the Jane Addams Hull-House. The invited group — which included artists whose work engages the prison system, city officials who oversee local criminal justice policies, administrators of social service organizations, human rights activists, persons formerly incarcerated, and a consortium of civically minded students we had convened from seven area universities — entered the hall and each selected a covered plate from stacks labelled “Final Meal Request #39,” “Final Meal Request #92,” and so on. Taking our seats at the dining tables that stretched the length of the hall, a requisite quiet filled the space with just the slightest clank as lids were lifted to reveal

chicken and dumplings, cheeseburgers, salads, bananas, peaches, and other desired foods though one selection was nothing at all.

The Chicago-based artist collaborative Lucky Pierre, which we had commissioned for this event, shared with the attendees that the dinners before them had been drawn from 310 last-meal requests

of death row inmates published online by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice from 1982 to 2003. For over a decade, Lucky Pierre had selected and prepared meals from this list, with one of their members eating a meal — or not — sitting alone and in silence for about 20 minutes while being filmed. But that evening was the largest and one of the very few group meals they had ever organized. There were no video cameras present; they would not have been able to capture the palpable weight, reverence and tension that took hold across the group. It had to be experienced. Only a bit later, as we sat with our plates, eating or not, did conversation begin to flow with discussions of the meals evolving into exchanges

about each other's work and then shared questions around prison reform, prisoners' rights and what justice might truly mean.

That evening we heard moving, impassioned accounts by Benneth Lee, previously a leader of a prominent Chicago street gang and former death row inmate, who is today head of an organization that seeks to empower the formerly incarcerated. We were touched by the story of Geraldine Smith, who told us how she did not give up her hope for justice during the 19 years she was imprisoned, the only female inmate on death row in Illinois. She fervently told of how she fought for her life, writing 500 letters to an attorney she had never even met; she made clear she needed to willfully assert her agency, powerfully recalling to us the moment she decided: “I'm going to wear the shackles. They aren't going to wear me!” No sooner was she released, having proven she was wrongfully charged, than Smith founded a grassroots organization

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ONE THAT WAS MADE
POSSIBLE BY THE SHARED
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WHOSE KNOWLEDGE,
UNDERSTANDING,
CONSCIOUSNESS, AND
OPENNESS... HAD BROUGHT
THEM TO THE TABLE.

to help other women redirect their lives and successfully re-enter society after imprisonment.

Sitting there, deeply moved by the experience and the words of Lee and Smith, I could not help but think of the many others who had inhabited, energized and brought a call to action in that exact same dining hall: sociologist-civil rights activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett, historian-civil rights activist W. E. B. DuBois, women's suffrage leader-activist Susan B. Anthony, first lady-activist Eleanor Roosevelt, journalist-activist Upton Sinclair, along with theorist-activist Dewey. I also thought of the critical efforts of Hull-House residents who were among the group of reformers who founded the nation's first juvenile court in 1899.

At the Lab School, the importance of the collective was often emphasized in the organization of the students' activities. Given that a significant objective of the curriculum was to cultivate an awareness of how one's actions relate to the greater environment or to society, close association with others and the "constant and free given and take of experiences" was deemed an essential aspect of the growth process considered true learning.

One Lab School teacher noted in her assessment of why it is so important for students to consider, question and explore the responsibilities of life roles of others, whether in history or in the present day: "It is the art of living that changes and progresses. This, children seemed to recognize in all phases of their work and play, whether constructive or experimental. Their activities were real and continuing, because they answered the genuine, ever present needs of life."

Whether the effects of Final Meals at the Hull-House becomes manifest in direct action, collaboration or heightened individual consciousness, each constitutes a changed way of seeing and being within the world. That is the lesson embodied experience affords. I know that having shared that moment with others will continue to impact my own thinking.

IN SHORT... WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

In the last couple of months we have:

Been really busy with Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme, travelled to Helsinki for another EU partner meeting, planned for our CAPP partners meeting for Venice Biennale; launched landing page for CAPP, cappnetwork.com; managed the Second Round of the Artist in the Community Scheme for 2015, were successful in our applications to Culture Ireland and Arts Council for an exciting commission and showcase in Chicago for 2016; Launched Typecast with DCCol and the Minister for Health; Launched TOLKA NIGHTS , Tolka Public Art Commission; saw Cork Ignite as part of our Cork Culture Night contribution with Simon McKeown; planned our upcoming programme as part of next year's RFO , chose some of the artists for the Create Networking Day at IMMA. Watch our website for the exciting events throughout this autumn.

Reading Room – Catalogue now Online

Create's Reading Room includes case studies and evaluations of collaborative arts projects, critical theory and guidebooks. The Reading Room can be used as a research facility by students, Create members, artists and arts organisations or it can simply be a space to view the range of work inspired by collaborative arts practices. We are now able to provide an online catalogue, referencing the publications and resources in the Reading Room, at the [weblink](#)

Are You a Member of Create?

Did you know that by joining Create you can have access to a range of benefits? Membership of Create is open to individual artists and arts organisations, across all art forms.

Members can now avail of reduced cost insurance for artists and organisations; a health plan from HSF (an organisation that gives cash back for everyday medical expenses); a discount on health insurance from Aviva; access to Garda vetting for artists and employers involved in arts and cultural activities; priority booking and discount for CPD Workshops; a range of discounts at arts venues around the country; access to short term 'hot desks' in the Create office at Curved Street.

Full details at www.create-ireland.ie



create national development
agency for collaborative arts

WELCOME TO CREATE NEWS

This is the nineteenth edition of Create News. Create News is published twice yearly in May and October. It is sent free of charge, features a guest writer and offers the latest information on Create events and services. If you do not wish to receive further editions, please write or email us at info@create-ireland.ie.

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SAVE THE DATE

Create Networking Day for Collaborative Arts

Date: 30 November Time: 10.00 – 18.00

Venue: IMMA Kilmainham, Dublin 8

A day of networking & sharing with guest artists. After the success of last year's Networking Day we're all set to gather the collaborative arts sector together again to celebrate, share knowledge, provoke and discuss. Create's annual Networking Day will take place on the 30th of November in IMMA, featuring fascinating insights from national and international speakers about socially engaged arts practice in both its tactical and strategic manifestations. The day will offer opportunities for artists across artform to engage in a rich exchange about practice and varied approaches to collaborative work in visual arts, theatre, dance. This year we will focus on the complex question of support for collaborative practice. How do commissioning bodies take into account the processual nature of durational, collaborative work which engages directly with people and places? What would the optimum institutional frameworks of support for collaborative practice look like? Attendees will have the opportunity to connect with their peers, interact with surprise guest artists, receive practical information and be inspired by dynamic and vibrant collaborative arts projects created here and elsewhere.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Artists across artform working in the context of participatory or socially engaged practice; arts organisations and festivals who programme socially engaged work; curators; outreach officers, cultural institutions; arts educators; community organisations.

Further details on guest artists will be available on create-ireland.ie.

NB: For Create members the event is free of charge.



Adam James 'Maps to Power', LARP, DIY12, Dublin
(Create & Live Art Development Agency as part of CAPP)
Image: Emma Haugh

Arts Council Artist in the Community Scheme

Second Round 2015

Create manages the Artist in the Community Scheme on behalf of the Arts Council. In the Second Round 2015 there were three successful applications for Project Realisation, four in the category of Research and Development, and three in Research and Development with Mentoring category.

Research and Development Award

Artist; Community / Context; Artform; Location

Ambra Gatto Bergamasco; Anti Racism Network / cultural diversity; Dance; Dublin

Shane Latimer; National Concert Hall / older people; Music; Dublin

Mary Keane; Past Pupils Boarding Schools / older people; Film; Waterford

Sheelagh Broderick; Skibbereen Family Resource Centre / Friends of the Rock / community of interest / place; Visual Arts; Cork

Research and Development Award with Mentoring

Artist; Community / Context; Artform; Location (Mentor)

Katherine Maguire & Deirdre Walsh; AKidWa (young migrant women) / cultural diversity; Visual Arts; Kerry (Aisling Prior)

John Conway; Women post cancer / arts and health; Visual Arts; Sligo (Dominic Thorpe)

Laura Sarah Dowdall; Anne Sullivan School for Deaf Blind / arts and disability; dance; Dublin (Amanda Coogan)

Project Realisation Award

Community; Artist; Project title; Context; Artform; Location

Castletarren CDG; Pauline O'Connell; Re-Tracing Memory (Beating the Bounds) ; Visual arts; Kilkenny

Neuron (Indo-Irish atheists); Jijo Sebastian; Colour Code; cultural diversity; Film; Dublin

Circle Voluntary Housing Association, Joe Lee; Barracks Square Estate: Three Ages of Place; Community of interest / place; Film; Dublin

Panel: Sean Taylor, Artist; Anne Marie McGing, Assistant Arts Officer Mayo County Council; Visual Artist and Curator, Michelle Browne; Observers: Seóna Ni Bhriain, Head of Children, Youth People and Education, Arts Council; Karen Whelan; Officer, Children, Youth People and Education, Arts Council; Chair: Katherine Atkinson.

Arts Council Artist in the Community Scheme

Bursary Award: Collaborative Arts & Architecture

The Arts Council Artist in the Community Scheme Bursary Award 2015 aims to support individual professional architects / artists working in the area of engaged and/or collaborative architecture. The Arts Council has provided this €10,000 bursary award as part of the Artist in the Community Scheme, which is managed by Create.

The purpose of the Bursary Award is to support and nurture professional arts practice and it is specifically aimed at an architect / arts practitioner who has a track record of working collaboratively. The Bursary Award of €10,000 provides the selected architect / artist with time and resources to carry out research and to reflect on practice. More particularly, the Bursary allows the architect / artist to consider key questions associated with creating architecture using collaborative methodologies.

It is expected that the successful applicant will share the learning arising from the Bursary with the wider architectural community and collaborative arts sector. Create will work in partnership with the Irish Architecture Foundation in providing information sessions and on the selection process.

For further information, contact Katherine Atkinson, Project Support, Professional Development, support@create-ireland.ie

**Deadline for applications:
16 November at 5pm.**

