

Artist residencies from the perspective of an art student: a personal account.

The Residency Diaries

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[A case study in partial fulfilment of the degree of MA Fine Art Studio Practice]

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Introduction

This case study will address artist residences and will discuss in relation to my own experiences. I will discuss the institutions and environments that host residency spaces and reflect in comparison on the varied characteristics of each residency.

What is an artist residency? Trans Artists explains, 'Artist-in-residence programs and other residency opportunities allow artists to stay and work elsewhere 'for art's sake'. They offer conditions that are conducive to creativity and they provide working facilities, ready to be used by individual artists.' (Trans Artists, 2013, www.transartists.org) Trans Artists is an organisation, which provides artists with a complete guide to artist residencies, operating as a network, or agents who advertises and arrange residencies for artists.

Residencies are available to artists worldwide, for many residency programmes, artists have to go through an application procedure. However residencies can also be self organised or an artist may even be invited to take part in a specific residency project. Some residency programs are integrated within larger institutions such as museums, universities, galleries and usually designed towards a specific objective, for example prior to my own experiences I assisted artist Julie Dodd on her artist-in-residence with The Blue Coat Display Centre, titled 'Making an Impact'. It was based at The Royal Liverpool University Hospital as part of an environmentally aware project with a specific aim to engage with patients in preparation for an installation, for the hospital's Roald Dahl Haemostasis and Thrombosis Centre. The idea was to encourage patients to participate in a project that turned plastic milk containers into invasive ivy. Other residencies are available to simply support the artist with their own practice. Residency programs can be extremely varied and no two are the same and the duration of a residency can vary from a few days to years.

This case study will explore the purpose of the 'artist-in-residence' in relation to the first hand experiences of an artist in residence. I would like to use two experiences to reflect and raise current issues surrounding art today, including art education and artist opportunities. The residencies presented in this case study reveal the relationship between artist and their artwork, artist and artist, artist and institution, with an emphasis on the need for residencies and their stimulus for producing productive outcomes.

Recorded in the format of a diary, the next chapters of this case study present a personal account of two artist residencies in the UK. I will use these experiences to investigate two very different ideas of an artist residency, as each experience offered a different approach and each had varying impacts on my feelings towards residencies, offering a view point of an artist's experience. The first chapter will record the events that took place during my Islington Mill residency, a solo residency part of a wider project based within a city environment. The second chapter will record the events that took place during my Merz Barn residency, a group residency based within a rural environment.

Artist-in-Residence Diary One

Artists involved: Rachel Pursglove

Project and Arts Space: *'Rule of 3'* at Islington Mill

Location: Salford, Manchester

Date of Residency: 14-01-2013 to 27-01-2013

Residency Brief:

In December of 2012 I was approached by Matthew Pendergast (Gass) and Jeni Holt-Wright, two young independent curators behind the scenes at *Rule Of 3*. At this time they were in the middle of writing a 'Grants for the Arts' application and working with Islington Mill to programme a month-long visual arts programme entitled *Rule Of 3*, set to take place from January 24th to February 22nd 2013 and I was to be invited to take part.

The programme included three short artist residencies, in the Islington Mill gallery space, with open studio events coinciding with other programmed activity, including talks, performances, gigs and club nights. I was invited to carry out the first of three residencies between the 14th and 27th January with an open studio from the 24th to 27th. If the Grants for Arts application came through I would be eligible for a small materials/expenses budget of around £100, in addition to this I was offered the use of the gallery space, support from the curators and Islington Mill, including accommodation at the Mills B & B. The Curators intentions were that this would be an opportunity for me to simply spend some time with my work in a different environment and share my practise with some different audiences, brought to the Mill for the other events that had been programmed. I was under no obligation to produce anything in particular and they were more than happy for this time to be used for research and experimentation.

As part of this residency and the wider project I was asked to take part in an informal filmed interview with the curators which would then be accessible from a website created for the project. Roughly speaking the aim of the project was to collect professional, academic, anecdotal and informal expressions on the way people are feeling about the general state of the arts in Greater Manchester and the North West and their place within it.

As part of the wider project they also had the involvement of Artist and Curator Mike Chavez-Dawson who they commissioned to make a short film and Dr Steven Gartside (Course leader, MA contemporary curating at Manchester Metropolitan University) who was asked to write an academic article. The first event night would also include, Artist Joanne McClung who would create a sound and light installation in the Mill attic, Illustrator Steven Nuttall and Artist and Film Company Trifecta Films for the documentation and interview filming.

Why I was selected for this Residency Opportunity

Gass and Jeni had previously seen my work at the UCLan Degree Show 2012 and then shortly after at International 3 as part of a graduate show titled, 'As Far As WeGot' which featured selected works by recent graduates based within the North West. This residency opportunity would give me the chance to see if a residency setting would suit me as an artist and benefit my work. The Open Studio would also give me the opportunity to present my work at its rawest/ experimental stage, inviting it to be scrutinised by the professional art world. I also thought this would be great to help develop my communication and social skills. As I am currently studying my Masters in Fine Art Studio Practice with the hopes of establishing myself as a professional artist one day, I saw this as a good opportunity to examine not only a residency setting, but an institution such as Islington Mill which houses over 50 artists studio spaces and hosts projects such as the Islington Mill Art Academy.

Residency Diary

Previous to the start of my residency, I arranged to meet Gass at the Mill. He gave me a brief overview of what the Rule of 3 was about and his and Jeni's involvement with Islington Mill. He then gave me a tour of the Mill and showed me the gallery space, club space, the outdoor space, including the B & B, studio spaces and the attic space. He introduced me to Maurice Carlin, artist and one of the Co-founders and members of Islington Mill Art Academy and Arts club, who I got to see working in his studio space (the entire 5th floor of the building).

Date: 14-01-2013

On the first day I arrived at the mill I moved in taking a variety of materials and equipment with me, I would be temporarily switching studios from the Hanover building at UCLan to the much bigger gallery space at the Mill. Later that day I met Jeni for the first time and she invited me to have a drink with herself, Gass and Paul Wright, a member of Trifecta Films.

Date: 15-01-2013

Within the gallery space I had two large tables, a smaller table, a large sofa and some chairs, feeling a little isolated and lonely, I wanted to make the space more inviting and enjoyable so I reshuffled what furniture I had and built myself a makeshift fort around me. I began to continue with the same work I had been doing at University, focusing around the theme of imaginary worlds. I found the Mill to be quiet, with the occasional person popping in and out. The gallery space itself is located very close to the entrance; the space is separated by a glass by-folding wall allowing people to see in as they passed. I had very little interaction with anyone from the mill. The only issue I had was it being the middle of January, it was very cold and the heating wasn't working.

Date: 16-01-2013

I continued to play around with my paper cut-outs, flicking through books and magazines I had brought with me, waiting for something to pop out of the page and be selected. I had brought my printer/scanner along with me so I could photocopy any images I found from the books, as to not destroy the original. I then began to make my characters and cut-outs 3D by sticking a small piece of card to the back, they were now free standing and I could position them within a scene to begin creating a narrative, using cardboard and wooden boxes to either frame or house them. However for one reason or another they didn't seem to be working and I wasn't satisfied with the outcome.

Later on that evening Jeni and Paul visited me in the studio space to do a bit of filming and catch me in action. This night was also Islington Mill's programme meeting and they were having a 'pot luck dinner'. I was invited to join them and I met the rest of the team, including Bill Campbell, founder of Islington Mill. This gave me a chance to not only find out Islington Mills Arts programme for the next 12 months but to observe how an establishment like itself runs such a programme. I was able to meet the people behind the scenes, from founder to visual arts co-ordinator to bar staff and witness the great rapport between all its members.

Date: 17-01-2013

After spending the day in the studio, I met up with Gass and he took me into Manchester to the private view of *Treatment*, an exhibition of contemporary abstract paintings at PS Mirabel (located on the ground floor of Mirabel Studios). As well as an exhibition at Paper gallery located at Mirabel featuring artists Lucy May Schofield and Leanne Richardson. We then went onto the Chinese Arts Centre to see artist Ma Qiusha's first UK solo exhibition, an up-and-coming artist living in Beijing. This was a fantastic opportunity to really get involved within Manchester's contemporary art scene and a chance to introduce myself as current resident and emerging artist and make some valuable connections. I am very grateful to Gass for his introductions, it was my first time visiting these galleries and I have returned many times since and visited some fantastic exhibitions.

Date: 18-01-2013

I didn't make it into the space today.

Date: 19-01-2013

I wanted to move away from my collage scenes and experiment with something else, so to give myself a bit of inspiration I searched the world wide web and I came across a couple of artists who had used projection within their work. Working with projection wasn't new to me, but looking at their work sparked some ideas into action, I unpacked my vintage 35mm

slide projector and began arranging my collection of scrap card and rubbish into sculptural forms within the space, using the projection to connect the two.

Date: 20-01-2013

Today I was going to the Mill to be filmed for my interview with Jeni and Gass. I was feeling quite apprehensive, afraid of making a fool of myself by saying something stupid. However I managed to suppress my nerves and respond when questions were asked, whether or not they were insightful or of any relevance, I would have to wait to see the final edit, as I instantly forgot every word that departed my lips.

Date: 21-01-2013

After my initial ideas weren't working, I spent some time reflecting over my work, thinking about what was important within my work and what it was in particular that I wanted to communicate. This analysis of my work allowed me to breakdown my thoughts and focus on representing the theme of other worlds as an idea, rather than a portrayal of one. This is when I came up with the idea to use the black cube as a symbol and metaphor to signify my ideas. I wanted to be less descriptive with the work, to leave it more open, to allow the viewer's imagination to tell the stories.

Date: 22-01-2013

Mat and Tao visited me at the gallery space today, this was a good opportunity to get some feedback on the work I had been doing over the last week. They were extremely helpful and provided critical feedback and constructive suggestions, particularly helping to formulate my ideas into more feasible solutions. I began thinking about how I wanted to display my work within the space. I wanted the viewer to interact with the work and with the space, to explore and discover the unexpected.

Date: 23-01-2013

This was the last day I had working in the studio, before the final big event night. I used all the available time given and experimented with the work right up until the last minute. I had decided to include some of the previous pieces featured at the International 3 exhibition along with the new experiments. Although the same theme runs through both, there is quite a transition between the two visually and I wished to represent the variety which my practice encompasses. I was also excited to see how the audience would respond to the assortment of both illustrative and metaphorical conceptions.

Date: 24-01-2013

I spent the morning finishing off a brief statement about my work, titled 'Worlds within Worlds' to present at the open studio in the evening. I then headed to the mill to clear my space and set up my work ready for the night's events. The doors opened at 6pm and I

drank a glass of wine to prepare me for the social interaction I would be encountering. I met Mike Chavez-Dawson for the first time and engaged into a pleasant discussion regarding the work I had displayed. He asked questions about my practice and at times I felt as though I was being tested, however I felt I responded well in my answers. He questioned me about my recent opportunities since graduating and I said, 'I don't feel like I'm ready yet' (for the Art world) and he replied 'As an artist you never do'. After exchanging conversation with various people, I ventured up to the attic space to see Joanne McClung's Sound and light performance. The evening's events were a huge success and I got a great response about my work from viewers. It was great to watch people interacting with the space, as the works were positioned sporadically and at times restricted the viewer's path, where as other pieces required the viewer to crouch in order to examine it fully, forcing the audience to be more engaged.

Date: 25-01-2013

Today was spent recovering from the night before. My work would now remain displayed in the gallery space till the end of my residency and open to visitors over the duration of the weekend. The Mill was hosting another explosive night in the club space featuring a band called Cheryl, however I decided to give it a miss, as I was still feeling the effects of the night before. The weather had also worsened and snow began to fall heavily and I did not wish to be stranded in the middle of Salford.

Date: 26-01-2013

The gallery space was open during the day for visitors, that evening the mill was hosting 'Sounds from the other City' in the club space, with performances by Topical Jungle. So I arranged with Jeni to keep the studio open during the event as a last chance for anyone who wished to view my work. After hearing about Jeni's antics from the night before, I immediately regretted not going to Cheryl's event.

Date: 27-01-2013

It was my very last day of the residency today, I took a few photographs to document my work and the space and all that was left to do was take my work down and clear the space ready for the next artist- in – residence. I thanked Jeni and Gass for the wonderful opportunity and said my goodbyes to the mill.

Wider Project

After the duration of my residency, the project continued with two more artist residencies and two more events nights, including an artist talk by Edgar Schmitz, followed by an invitation to a meal hosted at the B & B. I also returned to the Mill to take part in Mike Chavez-Dawson's, commissioned film project titled 'The Specter of Derrida', designed as a critical response to the 'Rule of 3' project. I took part in a focus group discussion touching on

subjects concerning artist opportunities and art education in conjunction with Derrida's philosophies. However I felt out of my depth, as my artistic and philosophical knowledge was modest compared to those around me. Nevertheless I managed to survive it relatively unscathed.

Evaluation

From doing this artist residency at Islington Mill, I've learnt a lot about Manchester and Salford's renowned art scene with a personal insight into the lives of the people behind the scenes. I am now fully aware and have great appreciation for how hard everyone works in order to continue to keep Manchester a thriving, innovative and exciting place to be. During my residency I found that the work I was doing wasn't working, though this became an advantage and the necessities of the situation prompted new possibilities within my work. I believe that my work would not have developed the way it did without having the experience of this residency and maybe a residency situation such as this is exactly what I need as an artist to maintain a productive ethos within my practice. In the beginning of my residency I did find it difficult to settle in and remain motivated, however as the week progressed it gradually became easier and the challenge of producing something for the open studio event focused my attention.

The Arts council did fund this project and I received a nice sum at the end of it. It has also given me an insight into arts council funding, the application process, the guidelines and requirements that the project had to meet, including the number of people that the project needed to reach.

Overall, I discovered what it was like to work in a residency environment, after two weeks of being an artist-in-residence, I found out that I liked the residency environment more than I thought I would, perhaps this is the future for my career as a professional artist. I observed the Islington Mill team and they were not only great colleagues but great friends and proved not only did they work hard, but they played pretty dam hard too. For me this only confirmed what I had been missing out on and has given me a taste of something amazing to aspire to. I also developed my networking and social skills as I was introduced to a variety of people working in various different sectors of the creative industry.

However, it has given me a glimpse into the 'real' art world and an insight into art language. After participating and witnessing discussions that overflowed with 'arts speak', indecipherable sentences and pretentious explanations I felt overwhelmed. However I don't deny even I attempt to write such statements such as I did for my open studio night, for reasons not even I know, perhaps it's a desire to become an insider or simply not wanting to appear stupid to a world I was trying to access. It has made me question whether the art world is something I really want to be a part of.

Artist-in-Residence Diary Two

Artists involved: Rachel Pursglove, Matthew Birchall, Charlotte Calland, Heather Chou, Tao Lashley-Burnley, Alex McIntosh

Arts Space and Organisation: Kurt Schwitters Merz Barn, Littoral Arts Trust

Location: Langdale, Cumbria

Date of Residency: 10-05-2013 to 20-05-2013

Residency Brief

During my last residency at Islington Mill I met Ian Hunter, founder of Littoral Arts and project leader of the Merz Barn site. I took this new contact as an opportunity to organise a group residency with other students from the MA course at UCLan. I contacted Littoral and Ian and Celia Larner, Co-Director and Administrator, who were very pleased to host a group from UCLan to come up and stay at the Merz Barn. It was free to art students and in return for our free stay, all that was asked of us was to help out with a few jobs around the site.

Why I selected to organise this residency opportunity

Apart from the connections I had made with Ian Hunter and this being an opportunity not to be missed I had previously visited the Merz Barn two years ago. The visit was during my BA and I took part in a two day residency with Mat Gregory and William Titley along with other students from UCLan. This more recent residency experience would give me the chance to see how the site had developed and changed. During my previous visit to the Merz Barn, I had taken part in a series of workshops and mini projects and discussions about further seminars/projects that could take place at the Merz barn for UCLan students in the future, so this time round would give me the chance to put some of our ideas into practice. The first visit was a fantastic opportunity and I got a lot out of the trip, it benefited my projects and enhanced my professional attitude towards my work as well as Kurt Schwitters becoming a prominent Influence on my practice since. I also thought it would be good to see the difference between a solo and group residency and compare the difference between city based residencies and rural based residencies.

Residency Diary

A week before the residency Matthew and I visited the site and met Ian for an informal meeting. When we arrived, Ian and a team of volunteers were digging and turning over soil to make way for a new garden walk way. Taking a break from his work, Ian gave us a tour around the site and showed us our accommodation which included the shippon, kitchen, caravan and bathroom facilities, then the outdoor space and of course the Merz Barn itself. He gave us a brief overview of their current research and developments for the site, along with a brief but very informative talk about Kurt Schwitters and the history of the Merz Barn. We then went over our arrangements, including a list of small jobs Ian had for us to do during our stay and a few suggestions from Ian about different projects we might want to get involved in. After the initial introduction our feelings of apprehension faded and we looked forward to the projects ahead of us. For me it was great to see how the site had changed over the last two years, including a new Merz Platz/Entartete Kunst memorial site and public seating area.

10-05-2013

We arrived and unpacked our things, Charlotte, Heather and I shared the caravan and the boys slept in the shippon. After settling in, we got to work. We all worked together to set up the wood chopping area and the barbeque/ work space outside. Using plastic sheeting and a huge tarpaulin we created sheltered areas to work in from the rain. It was our first evening at the Merz Barn and Ian and Celia invited us for dinner at their cottage. Sitting around a log fire, we enjoyed our food, whilst engaging in discussion about Littoral Arts and the Merz Barn. We then exchanged conversation on art and education that led on to a lengthy discussion on the politics of the university education system and specifically on how art education is now constructed within the constraints of an academic subject. We also discussed what happens after graduating, the politics of being an artist and the limited job prospects, arts funding, specifically the arts council and its policies. After the discussion we said goodnight to Ian and Celia and made the most of the fine evening, warming ourselves by the fire and roasting marshmallows and drinking rum beneath the stars.

11-05-2013

Previous to the residency Ian had informed us that there would be 12- 14 visiting artists from Grizdale Arts and NVA projects, (artists who were working on major innovative public art projects in other parts of the country), expected to arrive Sunday midday for lunch. So with this in mind, Ian suggested we get involved in their latest project aimed at resident artists. The cake room project, in connection with Schwitters desire to open up a tea room adjacent to the Merz Barn. The cake room project required us to make three separate pieces, including a cake stand, table cover and wall hanging, as well as making an actual cake which we would then serve to the guests on the following day. With this in mind we

needed some essentials and went into Ambleside, to get cake equipment and ingredients for our project.

Ian drove us into Ambleside and on the way we stopped at The Woolly Rug Company, designers and makers of contemporary hand-tufted floor rugs made from 100% local Herdwick wool, we met one of the makers, who kindly gave us a brief demonstration of their process and revealed a new commission they were currently working on. Whilst in Ambleside we stopped at a cafe for tea and cakes, finding ourselves in Schwitters old hang out, according to its owner. We picked up the essentials ready to go back, however we had made an error with the bus times and now had hour to kill so we went to the pub. Back at the Merz Barn we began our project, we wanted to make something that responded to our environment, and so with a cake stand in mind we thought the logs we had been chopping for firewood would make perfect individual stands for our cakes. With not a lot of time to complete the project, we concentrated on making the stands and preparing the cakes.

12-05-2013

In preparation for the artists visiting, we were up early to start baking our homemade nutella and peanut butter cakes. They arrived around lunchtime and we served them tea and cake in Kurt Schwitters tearoom. After introductions we joined them for lunch and Grizdale Arts gave us a presentation about their organisation and projects they were currently working on. This then lead on to an impromptu seminar discussion about art education and arts funding, touching on subjects such as tuition fees, teaching, curriculum, the institutionalisation of art in education and the arts council.

‘Do you know the difference between education and experience? Education is when you read the fine print; experience is what you get when you don't.’ (Seeger, n.d., cited at www.goodreads.com) This was very much the question and collective feeling of the group. After the artists had left, we remained seated next to the fire, enjoyed some wine and continued in conversation with Ian and Celia, the topic focusing around Ian’s feelings towards the arts council.

13-05-2013

Today we helped rake stones from the Merz Barn lawn in preparation for the lawn to be re-seeded and rolled. This proved to be quite a strenuous task for us townies (which Ian now referred to us by) especially some more than others and it wasn’t long before Charlotte had had enough and went inside to prepare dinner for us all. Over the many hours in the field, we experienced every single type of weather, from glorious sunshine, to torrential downpour and hailstone. This continued up until early evening, I think we could all agree that we were glad when the day ended. Yes we did find the whole day tiring and most of us bar Mat is not used to any manual labour, but we got stuck in and worked hard.

14-05-2013

For some reason I can't remember anything we did this day, apart from getting extremely inebriated.

15-05-2013

After a little too much alcohol intake the night before, we awoke feeling a bit tender and spent the morning lying in bed listening to the sound of the stream flowing into the plunge pool that sat at the wheel of our caravan. We drove into town to drop Alex off, as he was leaving for a couple of nights. Whilst in Windermere we explored the shops and treated ourselves to fish and chips. We arrived back and Ian approached us with an idea for a Merz land art piece to have MERZ spelt out in red poppies over the hill lawn.

After a late night supper, Ian invited us over to the cottage for an informal presentation on Littoral Arts and their involvement with socially engaged and community farm projects. He discussed everything from how they founded the organisation to the beginnings of their barn projects and the takeover of the Merz Barn. Whilst listening to Ian, he said something that welded itself onto my brain 'We knew what artists should be doing and this is it', this statement laid uneasy in my thoughts.

16-05-2013

Prior to our stay Ian had informed us that him and Celia would be away for a few days and would be leaving the Merz barn site in our hands until they returned. Celia had left us that morning, leaving Ian to direct us on our new Merz land art project. Mat and Tao began marking out the land for the letters using bamboo sticks as guides. This took some time and precise measurements to make sure the spaces were even and each letter in proportion. Whilst I was helping the boys outside, Heather and Charlotte were inside making homemade moss paper and paper boats for their other anticipated projects. With Celia now gone, it was our responsibility to look after the hen and her newly born chick. That evening, after enjoying another superb meal cooked by Charlotte, our conversation turned into a discussion about Ian and Celia and Littoral Arts and how in turn they viewed us.

17-05-2013

Ian left this morning and so today was our first day looking after the Merz barn, we opened the gates at 10am ready for any visitor's we might encounter. We were in need of some essentials, so Heather, Charlotte and I took a walk to the local shop. On the way back to the barn, we stopped by the river and sat on the bridge that linked the two lands either side. We suddenly felt 12 years old again dangling our legs over the edge, drinking lilt and stuffing out faces with chocolate biscuits. We spent some time reminiscing over our childhoods, exchanging tales of our early days and comparing our cultural upbringings, mine and Charlotte's English backgrounds with Heather's American customs.

Once back at the site, Heather, Charlotte and I set off on a trail of discovery, exploring the grounds in search for anything that caught our eye, anything that had the possibility to become something. I gathered quite a collection from broken crockery to concrete cylinders.

That afternoon I began working on my rock pulley project, spending the majority of the time in the workshop/tool shed. The first thing I made were the cogs for the pulley system, using small log cut offs. I drilled holes straight through either side using an old hand drill as this was all I had at my disposal.

We decided to have a break from our work and enjoy our now uninterrupted free time. So we had a few cheeky rums and lazed in the caravan listening to mow town classics whilst Tao and Mat sneaked off into the woods to work on their secret project, yet to be disclosed to the rest of the group. That evening Mat and Tao set off on a walk to explore the area, whilst we stayed making, Heather engrossed in lino printing, I sanding my log cogs and Charlotte cooking again.

18-05-2013

Alex returned today and everyone set about continuing with their projects. The boys heading out into the woods again and the girls snug in the shippon. I sneaked off for some time alone, to gather my thoughts and breathe in the fresh air for soon we would return to the smog of urban living. I walked to the river, over the bridge, up the hill and far as the quarry, I rested on top a magnificent slab of rock. Before returning back to the site I stopped at the riverside across from the lodge where I had stayed two years previous. I stayed there a while and watched the water glide over the gradient rock bed, like silk dancing in the air, it was so still it almost looked like clear plastic sheeting rolling off a huge industrial machine.

19-05-2013

Aware this was our last full day and we had a lot we wanted to get done, we quickly set about our day.

We finished the Merz land art project and together we raked over the marked out letters and Charlotte planted the poppy seeds. Before separating and heading off to work on individual projects, we got together for a group photo. Heather used the moss paint she had made earlier in the week to paint a replica of one of Schwitters Merz collages on to the outside wall of the shippon.

Earlier in the week Charlotte and I had come up with the idea to put together a film documenting a collaborative performance. The idea came to us whilst listening to some classical opera, along with reading up on Schwitters sound performances. In one of the books we noted some portrait images of Schwitters portraying animated expressions, so in response to this, we set up a space in the Merz Barn itself and choose some music. Now

ready, Heather filmed us in action, a combination of chaos and ridiculousness. Whilst we were busy with this the boys were off continuing to build their secret project.

After our performance, we began to set up for our next filming project, 'The Ships Graveyard'. The river that pooled next to our caravan was an extension of the stream that flowed through the land above over the boundary wall, so we climbed over to begin our boats' journey from there, gathering video footage and photographs to be edited once we returned home.

Continuing with my rock pulley project and enjoying being hands on and using the workshop tools, I decided to make an addition to the paper boats and carve out a log boat from one of the tree branches. With the objects and items I had collected during our hunting expedition I built a small assemblage beneath the water of the plunge pool, supported by the rocks underneath. I played around with the arrangement for some time, right up until the last ray of daylight; I would have to finish it off tomorrow as I could no longer see.

It was now dark and the boys were ready to unveil their secret project, 'Project Deux', with torches at the ready, we took a night time walk into the woods, watching our step for mud traps and performing balancing acts across a stream. We were confronted with a Merz Barn imitation, complete with doorway, walls and roof. Built from natural materials, such as branches, rocks and leaves from around the site, they had utilized the trees surrounding a small open space before the boundary wall, building and transforming an open space into an enclosed environment.

20-05-2013

Today was our last day so we were up early to clean up and pack our things. We also finished off the cake room project, installing the wall hanging and tabletop at the Merz barn. I put my finishing touches to my rock pulley project, lodging the pulley system in place between two trees either side of the plunge pool. There were two pulleys in total, one lifting a small rock and the other a piece of broken crockery, by pulling on the ropes attached to each item, I was able to lift them in and out of the water the rock smashing through the water's surface as the crockery filled its surface.

Evaluation

Overall, I found the group situation not only to be more enjoyable but equally as productive and feel I have built strong lasting relationships, which I don't think would have happened if it hadn't been for this opportunity. Although by the end of the residency I was ready to return to my home comforts, I would quite easily trade city life to living in the remote countryside, adopting a quieter, slower pace of life.

Though we spent much of the beginning of our residency helping Ian with jobs around the site, once we settled in, it proved to be a very productive environment for us all. It was great to experience an artist residency within a rural setting, the complete opposite to what I had experienced at Islington Mill. For the most part it was a completely relaxing and enjoyable experience, getting back to basics, with no TV and basic facilities, forced to chop fire wood everyday and cooking meals from scratch, there was no time wasted and no distractions from our usual modern day lives.

The limited resources or should I say the unlimited resources of our natural surroundings, meant it was a perfect setting to push start our creative energy. I found the atmosphere to be exactly what I had imagined and more, I felt like we had shared a true experience of Kurt Schwitters daily life 70 years before. Ian and Celia were great hosts and had much knowledge and life experience to share with us although we might not have agreed with everything they had to say.

All in all, it was a rewarding experience and definitely one to remember. I enjoyed my time at the Merz Barn extremely and feel privileged to have spent it with the rest of the group, especially fortunate to have experienced it with new friends Charlotte and Heather. Our time together gave us a glimpse into a future of collaborations and residencies perhaps involving cultural exchanges with Heather's hometown in Texas.

It was more than just an artist residency; it was an introduction into a way of life.

Conclusion

The aim of this case study was to establish the purpose of an artist residency in relation to my own version of events and reflect on how these experiences have brought me closer in preparing for the transition from student to professional artist. They can act as an in-between stage, not only for the development of one's practice, but for the development of one's social interaction with the art world.

These residencies have helped me to gain a greater understanding of the professional art world, including what to expect and what is expected of me. Opportunities such as these provide a wealth of information that education simply does not 'The only source of knowledge is experience'. (Einstein, n.d., cited at www.goodreads.com)

Res Artis, another residency network association, highlights the key aspects, 'They also allow individuals to explore his/her practice within another community; meeting new people, using new materials, experiencing life in a new location. Art residencies emphasize the importance of meaningful and multi-layered cultural exchange and immersion into another culture,' (Res Artis, n.d., www.resartis.org). Although both residencies were equally valuable and productive, they provided an insight into two very different existences, helping me to decide what kind of residency I might choose in the future. It also gave me a better understanding about how institutions such as Islington Mill and the Merz Barn operate, to house not only resident artists, but how exhibitions and events are organised. Also it goes to show with or without the added pressures of a open studio event, I am still more than capable of producing innovative works. Participating in these residencies has boosted my self-confidence as I was seen as a young emerging artist rather than just an art student and I felt I responded well to the opportunity, not only in the work I produced but in the way I presented myself.

Though my experiences were thoroughly enjoyable, they have somewhat clouded my view on art education and arts funding, leaving me with a more cynical view of the art world than expected. Learning that there are alternatives to art education; you don't have to follow the constraints of curriculum led courses, there are other institutions besides universities, such as Islington Mill, The Merz Barn and Grizdale Arts that offer equally informative and constructive teachings, along with the experience of the real world, that students are often sheltered from in the safe housings of university life. I feel it's a shame that today's society has been manipulated into conforms of government policies.

The Arts Council was another hot topic for debate during our Merz Barn residency and after participating in discussions with Grizdale Arts (who are completely owned and run by the arts council) and Littoral arts (self-funded). I have again been left feeling somewhat sceptical of the whole funding system from application process to policy objectives. Even though my participation in the 'Rule of 3' project at Islington Mill was as a whole, a success and attracted a wide audience. I can't help thinking that the arts council is simply a brand logo

stamped all over their funded projects. Seen as a trademark label for 'must see art', in the same way designer labels on 'must have' handbags are to celebrities. Even if the art is complete bullshit and the handbag is dreadful, it doesn't matter as long you have viewed the 'must see' or have the 'must have'. It appears to me that universities today and arts funding perhaps have their priorities all wrong, spending money where it is simply not needed and concerning themselves with their appearances rather than focusing on the actual real needs of artists and students.

This case study reveals my frustrations, aims and achievements, as I learned those of Gass' and Jeni's, Ian's and Celia's. For me it was a glimpse into the work ethic of curator/ co-ordinator, I feel privileged to have worked alongside all involved and to have shared in their frustrations, aims and achievements. More than anything, I found their dedication to their projects to be truly commendable.

This case study details what myself as an MA Fine Art student and emerging artist thinks about artist residences and what things I have learnt about the world of art and artists. I hope the case study may be of relevance to any artist who is contemplating embarking on such a residency and who may find my notes somewhat insightful.

For me an artist residency is purely about time and space to focus on the ever progressive nature of one's practice. To ask questions in order to make connections, to note the questions that need asking, to continue the search of self discovery. I hope that artists can find a way of talking about art without the bullshit. It is about an artist being an artist and responding with, 'This is what making work is like'.

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Website and video/ Interview links

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