

Art and Housing Struggles (London, 31 May–1 Jun 18)

London South Bank University School for Art and Creative Industries 103 Borough Road, London, SE1 0AA, May 31–Jun 1, 2018

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Art and Housing Struggles: between art and political organizing

Across the world, cities are experiencing a so-called housing crisis. Financialisation of land and housing, the increasing dominance of rent plus cuts in social wages have degraded the lives of millions of people. A growing numbers of evictions, the lack of social housing and increasing privatization combines with civic disempowerment through post-political 'regeneration' to amplify a general sense of frustration concerning housing. When experienced as a whole these factors are lived in as systemic housing violence. In response to this, new self-organized housing movements have emerged over the last decade including increased neighbourhood campaigns, tenants and renters' initiatives, anti-gentrification and anti-eviction groups, as well as collaborative local and global housing networks.

Increasingly art has been integral to the neoliberal governance and policies around 'housing regeneration'. Art is called upon to produce social and economic outcomes, to regenerate the hollowed-out economies of post-industrial cities and to energise communities – regardless of a lack of evidence that the arts can perform any of these functions. In some parts of the world, national public institutions, private developers, supra-national institutions and NGOs are keen to sponsor socially-engaged art projects. The role of art in 'the housing regeneration' shows that art is an integral part of current capitalist mutations that are turning the neoliberal art subject into a source of capital.

The focus of this conference is the contradictions and potentials of art in contemporary housing struggles. We intend to continue building on previous efforts to connect art and housing in discussions surrounding gentrification and social as well as rethinking art and housing through social reproduction. We are interested in a fragile but dynamic exchange between art and political organising, including analysing and organising within a close proximity to housing movements.

Over the two days of the conference, these are some of the questions we hope to be asking:

- What artistic methods have been both useful and consequential for social actions and housing struggles?
- Where can art be practiced as an 'activism' in housing struggles and what could be gained from this merger and what might be lost? Is more 'activism' what is needed?
- What personal or political stakes do artists or researchers bring into housing campaigns and thus what accountabilities to those in struggle do artists need to uphold?
- What are the potentials and pitfalls of struggles against artwashing? Is 'artwashing' a useful term?
- What can artistic methods and processes bring into the everyday (un)making of home and

homing practices? What meaningful solidarities can be offered?

- How do we critically tackle the pitfalls of representation, documentation and exhibition? How do we usefully make an encounter with housing campaigns to produce an investigation and analysis that strengthens community organising efforts?

- How can artists work intersectionally across the often subterranean dynamics of race, class, gender present within localised housing campaigns?

- How might artists engage closely with housing struggles to enable community reflection on victories and losses?

Programme:

Thursday 31st May

Conference Venue: Studios, LSBU 103 Borough Road

09.00-09.30 Registration

09.30-10.00 Welcome address

Ana Vilenica, Post-doc Marie Curie Research Fellow, School of Art and Creative Industries, LSBU

Elena Marchevska, Director of The Research Centre for Digital Storytelling, London South Bank University

Chris Jones, Southwark Notes Archives Group

10.00-11.30 Session I

Panel 1: Art and Housing: Theory and Context

Intro: Ana Vilenica, LSBU

From Creative-Led Regeneration to Developer-Led Art? Josie Berry & Anthony Iles

With a mouthful of earth and eyes teeming with ghosts James Day & Sebastian Hedevang

Coffee Break

11.30 -13.00 Session II

Panel 2: Art and Housing Movements

Intro: Chris Jones, Southwark Notes Archives Group

Exhibiting activism in unified Berlin Nicola Guy

Tāmaki Housing Group and Anti-gentrification Action in Aotearoa Ella Grace McPherson-Newton & Sakiko Sugawa

Megaphone Choir: Mourning, Art and Housing Activism Sylvi Kretzschmar

13.00-14.00 Lunch break

14.00-17.00 Workshop 'Organizing Sound / Organizing a Movement'

Dont Rhine, Ultra-red, Los Angeles

17.00 Reception for participants and guests

Friday June 1st

Conference Venue: Studios, LSBU 103 Borough Road

9:00 Coffee

9.30-11.00 Session III

Panel 3: Art, Housing and Struggles for meaning

Intro: Chris Jones, Southwark Notes Archives Group

A Gramscian Analysis of Social Practice Art: The Case of Project Row Houses Alyssa Pellegrino Erspamer

Museums, Identity and the Heritage of Social Housing: A Case Study of the V&A's 'Ruins in Reverse' Zeena Price

Coffee break

11.00 -12.30 Session IV

Panel 3: Homelessness, Home and Art

Intro: Elena Marchevska, LSBU

Dwelling and its Discontents: Social arts practice and participatory action research Julia Heslop / Hannah Marsden / Alison Merritt Smith

Doing Justice to Images Eric Goldfischer

12.30-13.30 Lunch break

13.30-15.00 Session V

Panel 3: Housing, commoning and art

Intro: Ana Vilenica, LSBU

Metropoliz/MAAM: Art, squatting, commodification of urban commons in Rome Andreea Micu

Symbiotic Commons: Housing Estate gardening group Zoe Petersen

Bringing Creativity into the Bedroom, the Living Room, and the Communal Kitchen: Notions of Creativity in Coliving Victoria Anderson

Coffee Break

15.30-17.00 Public reading of the play by Zlatija Kostić: In what way is fascism (dis)continued?

I Sued Myself

Reading by Nebojsa Milikic, Zlatija Kostic and students from LSBU

Break

17.00-19.00 Closing Event 'Art and Housing struggles in London'

Moderation: Ana Vilenica, LSBU and Chris Jones, Southwark Notes Archives Group

Participants:

You Should See the Other Guy (Emer Mary Morris and Nina Scott)

Voices That Shake! (Zena Edwards and Abdul Hasan)

Rainbow Collective & Ledbury Action Group (Hannan Majid)

Workshop

Organizing Sound / Organizing a Movement

Dont Rhine

The question, "What did you hear?" can begin a dialogue. It can also initiate an inquiry. In late 2012 the Los Angeles members of the international sound art collective, Ultra-red, launched School of Echoes Los Angeles. Bringing together artists and popular educators, School of Echoes undertook a multi-year investigation into the causes of gentrification and how it can be stopped. That investigation demanded that the group test their analysis by forming, in the summer of 2015, the L.A. Tenants Unions (Sindicato de Inquilinos de Los Ángeles); the city's first autonomous

tenants' movement defending housing and community against the ravages of speculative development and mass displacement. This workshop will invite participants to reflect on their own experiences with gentrification violence. The workshop will also introduce a framework for transforming experience into an investigation that takes action in the world.

Dont Rhine is a sound artist and popular educator. He is a founding member of Ultra-red. Dont is based in Los Angeles where he serves on the advisory board of the needle exchange program, L.A. Community Health Project. He is a member of the anti-gentrification research collective, School of Echoes Los Angeles, and he is a member-organizer with L.A. Tenants Union. Dont supports himself as a part-time instructor at Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Workshop and public reading of the play by Zlatija Kostić

In what way is fascism (dis)continued? I Sued Myself

...the commencement of the trial to Zlatija Kostić upon the charges filed by Zlatija Kostić on account of life situation in which she has found herself in the settlement of Kamendin, living in a council flat from which she and her family stand to be forcefully evicted...

The play written by Zlatija Kostić was created during and after the survey which had been conducted together with collaborators from the settlement of Kamendin in Zemun Polje by Nebojša Milikić and Tadej Kurepa within the realization of a project. In response to one of survey questions, Zlatija designated herself as a culprit for the situation in which she has found herself together with her family, saying in the survey that due to all the troubles that have befallen her in Kamandin, she will „sue herself.“ The play is a sort of a recording from a court trial which Zlatija has launched against herself, incidentally fulfilling one of imperatives of bourgeois society, which routinely turns the blade of guilt and condemnation for difficult living conditions which repress them and keep them at the social bottom precisely towards those in need. Balancing between the hammer of bourgeois legal Social Darwinism and the anvil of declarative clemency of bourgeois society, Zlatija evokes her life choices, which seem to her today as illusions and failures. However, from the perspective of her former convictions and the general social climate or inertia which she could have hardly resisted, Zlatija cannot even understand her own accusations, although institutional and ideological context lead her to accept the punishment without guilt, as she has accepted to live in a council flat which is, for variety of reasons, not a council flat.

The workshop consists of rehearsals and readings of the play I Sued Myself by Zlatija Kostić for an audience bringing together conference participants, active members of activist and academic circles in London (Great Britain) and a number of other cities and countries. Adaptation of the play is the goal that is aspired to in two conceptual dimensions, both of which are based on an attempt of a transfer and potential explanation/understanding of the socio-economic, political and cultural background of the personal histories of the main protagonists and other characters in the play. The subjective and objective processes and states, as well as the concrete events that form part of the narrative of the play and thus the court trial are also presented to the audience, which is to pass its own judgment. They are the subject matter of the first dimension of the adaptation conducted in collaboration with the performers – students of theatre and performing arts who will be reading the play at the conference.

During the preparations for the reading of the text, the investigation will focus on identifying the social position that students feel close to or are familiar with that can partially or fully reflect the position of characters in the play. Based on such a position they can engage in their own

interpretation. The capacity for empathy or sensitising i.e. the possibilities and ways of expressing affective or consciously chosen or indeed intuitive solidarity with the main protagonists or other characters in the play are examined, conceived and tested via the performance itself. The other dimension of the adaptation is a presentation of the results of this translation and transfer in the context of the conference that analyses the relation between art, housing struggles and policies in different domains and environments. Following the reading session, conference participants will have a chance to play the part of jury members, the roles that they can assume within the Forum Theatre framework.

Closing Event “Art and Housing struggles in London”

About participants:

You Should See the Other Guy is an all-female political theatre company made up of housing activists from Focus E15 Campaign, people at risk of homelessness and people who have experienced the Social Housing system. Their ethos is – DIY Theatre: DIY Resistance – where creativity and activism is for anyone and everyone. Their debut production, ‘Land of the Three Towers’ tells the story of the 2014 Focus E15 Occupation of four empty flats on Carpenters Estate, of which we were key campaigners.

Zena Edwards was raised in Tottenham, North London. She is known for her polemic voice, speaking on panels for climate change and creative campaigning for equality and equitable rights. Zena has been involved in performance for 20 years – as a writer/poet performer, facilitator and vocalist. She is Creative Director of @ViD an umbrella creative arts and activism company and she is core project developer of Voices that Shake! Youth, Race, Media and Power Arts project.

Abdul Hasan is a young person who grew up in Bethnal Green, an area experiencing extreme gentrification. He is currently doing youth and community work in Shoreditch and Kilburn. He has been involved with Voices that Shake - a collective that engages young people with political and personal issues through creativity - since 2015, as well as other collectives that centre working-class voices in the arts.

Voices That Shake! brings together young people, activists, educators and artists to challenge social injustice, with a focus on addressing racial inequality. Using a model of personal transformation and structural change, to challenge established imbalanced power-bases and re-imagine new infrastructures in opposition to capitalism and colonialism.

Hannan Majid (with Richard York) runs a documentary production house called Rainbow Collective which specialises in creating documentaries dealing with human and children's rights issues. They have produced documentaries in South Africa, Bangladesh, Iraq and the UK. Hannan will be talking about their educational approach to documentary work as well as his recent experiences as part of the Ledbury Action Group, a housing campaign created as an emergency response to unsafe and appalling housing conditions on their Council estate.

Graphic recording by Laura Sorvala.

<http://www.auralab.co.uk/services/graphic-recording/>

You can register by using following links:
<https://trade.lsbu.ac.uk/product-catalogue/conferences/arts-and-creative-industries/art-and-hou>

[sing-struggles-between-art-and-political-organising/](http://trade.lsbu.ac.uk/browse/extra_info.asp?compid=1&modid=1&prodid=609)

If you are a student/unwaged please use the following link:

http://trade.lsbu.ac.uk/browse/extra_info.asp?compid=1&modid=1&prodid=609

If you are unable to pay participation fee and want to come please write us an email at: digitalstorymakingresearch@gmail.com

The workshop, public reading and closing event are free of charge.

The international conference Art and Housing Struggles: between art and political organising will be hosted by The Centre for Research in Digital Storymaking and will be held in the School of Arts and Creative Industries at London South Bank University. This conference is generously supported by the The Centre for Research in Digital Storymaking, at London South Bank University and the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 707848.

Reference:

CONF: Art and Housing Struggles (London, 31 May-1 Jun 18). In: ArtHist.net, May 26, 2018 (accessed Apr 5, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/18244>>.