

## Join: Crafting Conversations with Communities (Birmingham, 1 Jul 26)

Birmingham, Jul 01, 2026

Deadline: Apr 30, 2026

Sian Vaughan

We invite proposals for papers, presentations, and practice-based contributions to Join: Crafting Conversations with Communities, a conference exploring the possibilities, challenges, and futures of art, craft and design practice.

Over the past several decades, artists have increasingly engaged with collaborative and community-oriented modes of practices often described as activist, socially engaged, participatory, or collective. These approaches often challenge established distinctions between artist-producer and audience, expert and participant, and foreground processes of co-creation, situated knowledge, dialogue, and shared authorship.

Such work has been theorised through critical frameworks that foreground social interaction as the site of aesthetic production, emphasise the political and ethical stakes of participatory practice, and/or situate artistic practice within broader systems of networked organisation and distributed cultural labour. Within the contemporary Higher Education landscape and wider cultural sector, such practices have gained renewed prominence with institutions increasingly emphasizing public engagement, collaboration, and demonstrable social impact which further positions these approaches as central to contemporary cultural production. However, these developments risk co-opting collaborative practices for institutional agendas, raising important questions about the conditions under which participation occurs and whose interests it ultimately serves.

In the UK, these dynamics intersect with the longer-term effects of austerity policies that have reshaped the cultural landscape. More than a decade of funding reductions, the erosion of local cultural infrastructures, and the contraction of civic institutions have significantly altered the contexts in which artists operate and with whom they collaborate.

In brief, this conference will focus on how participatory art, craft and design practices are understood in relation to shifting institutional, social, and economic conditions today. We welcome diverse submissions from practitioners, researchers, and curators and encourage interdisciplinary proposals from fields including art history and cultural studies.

Potential themes include:

- Critical responses to austerity
- New models of collaboration
- DIY and collective cultural production

- Evidence and Impact in art, craft and design research
- Ethics, care, and responsibility in participatory practice
- Craft as relational labour
- Rethinking authorship, expertise, and co-creation
- Challenges of articulating embedded and iterative making

Please send a short abstract of 250–300 words, indicating your intended contribution format and any technical requirements along with a 100 word biography to raad@bcu.ac.uk by 30 April 2026. Selected papers will be invited to submit for either a journal special issue or edited volume.

RAAD - the centre for research in art, architecture and design at Birmingham City University

Reference:

CFP: Join: Crafting Conversations with Communities (Birmingham, 1 Jul 26). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 20, 2026 (accessed Apr 15, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52039>>.