

# BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Hope, Sophie and Donini, Stefania (2016) Social Art Map 2. [Artefact]

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or alternatively

Phoebe Davies (PD)

Sam Trotman (ST)

Programme Producers

Claire Orme (co)

No Tail Project Co-ordinator

of hidden or removed histories of the town

emerges. Temple Manor is a site mentioned

JAN 2015 PD & ST: One-to-one meetings

(e.g. local library and Strood Community

Ruth Ewan (RE) is a good match, linking

her practice to the idea of local hidden

with residents and members of local groups

Project, Ramo's cafe). The idea of lost histories

and buildings is reiterated. Residents also say 'We want something to happen that brings people together in the town'. PD & ST think

APR 2015 PD & ST: Introduce RE to contacts

contract between OOTO Places and idle

OCT — DEC 2015 PD & ST: Community

co-ordinator steps back from project due

OCT 2015 PD & ST: OOTO Places team

NOV 2015 PD & ST: Continue to adve

workshops. **PD & ST** bring on Claire Orm

(CO) as Project Co-ordinator and support

**CO:** Meets **PD** at University of Kent.

Comes on board as project co-ordinator.

with communities; a dream come true.

I studied Fine Art at Kent and then moved back

as somewhere with much history. Also it was quite interesting to take on a different role in a project, really good experience'.

**DEC 2015 CO:** 'It was so amazing to see all the participants grow in confidence and skill

amazing performance two nights in a row! I had many audience members tell me how

throughout the process, then put on the most

RE and RA in project management

advertise workshops locally, through meetings,

Rachael Anderson (RA) (idle women) in project

OOTO Places

Strood By Ruth Ewan

OCT 2015 DH: Sees the poster in a Chinese

During the project her daughter's interest

story was really clever and really well written. It was a great process, really enjoyed meeting

in October about the workshops. At that point

she has just finished a feature film job and

to actually meet local people in Strood, and

not just be there to go to Wilkinson's and Aldi..

I wouldn't know that Strood has history, and

the painting about the horse was a surprise.

feeling of responsibility; likes the idea, wants

to find out about the area and how the project

could leave a legacy. 'The professional team

had a clear idea of what was going to happen;

Personally it was a huge challenge. We did get

carried along with the whole experience. How

aware how much I was going to volunteer

**DEC 2015 DH:** 'I'm not an actress, I only

wanted to do this because it was for Strood,

We wouldn't have met any of these people

It has been absolutely fabulous and it would

MH: It could be encapsulated into schools

programmes and change the culture; when

people are asked about Strood, they talk about

be great to see something carry on. It's so

Strood specific and so much went into it.'

it was born out of nothing, and that for me was

the magic... just seeing the script and watching

**NOV 2015 DH:** About to drop out due

everybody... Unexpected things? Me being

MH: Initially gets involved to support with

waned, but DH continued.

partner Malcolm (MH) about it. Her

April — December 2015

Ruth Ewan (RE) Donna Hazleton (DH) Malcolm Hazleton (мн) Sophy Millington (SM) Penny Cliff (PC) Participants

SEP — DEC 2014 PD & ST: Meet with local JAN 2015 RE: Phoebe Davies and Sam Trotman (PD & ST) contact to request meeting

> FEB 2015 RE: 'It took me a few months to get my head around the levels of commissioning process from Creative People and Places and I only did so halfway through the project, given

APR 2015 RE: 'I hadn't committed at that point, but I felt they trusted me – that's why

MAR 2015 RE: 'Strood appealed to me

as it wasn't an obvious place; PD & ST seemed

genuinely open about possible forms of the work... I tend to work quite fluidly... there were

MAR 2015 PD & ST: Meet RE in London. **MAY 2015 RE:** Feels sense of trust in the team and an openness. 'When I first came, I got the feeling I didn't want to do anything too "contemporary art". Has the idea of the pantomime in mind. Gets in contact with oroducer Rachel Anderson (RA) (idle women)

in Strood and local points of interest: JUN 2015 — JULY 15 RE: Take RA on We wanted to spend time with Ruth in Strood Johnston (AJ). Carry out initial investigation in and around Strood, using local archives and spending time with the residents to gain

lighting designer), Dom Coyote (music director) JUN — JULY 2015 PD & ST: Confirm

AUG 2015 PC: Has experience as theatre The project sounded intriguing as it was being led by an artist and it was an opportunity AUG 2015 PD & ST: Appoint local I do lots of work in non-theatre spaces and ecruitment for September workshops. really interesting as well as the time of the year. the winter solstice... it was an appealing idea, right up my street'

OCT — DEC 2015 RE & PC: Research

OCT 2015 RE: During the research process, AJ finds the 15<sup>th</sup> century Altarpiece of St Thomas's horse in Strood, which will inform the development of the script, co-written w PC. First workshops (led by RE & PC) with ocal papers, posters and flyers. Support **RE** and the de [puppeteer) and Geoff Doel (academic) begin input into project.

PC: Runs open workshops every Saturday exercises in acting, prop-making, set building tage management, lighting and music. PC & RE present the idea of the pantomime and mummers plays. 'The location and the idea

NOV 2015 RE: Workshops very enjoyable, with people drifting in and out. 'I sat back and absorbed what people were saying building this merged from the workshops and the research

process. 'It was a large script and rehearsal time was not enough... it would have needed two weeks of solid rehearsal, it was a massive

**DEC 2015 PC:** Despite the uncertainties (i.e. participants having to step back from commitments), **PC** is confident that the belief. I have a profound knowledge of the power of Dr. Theatre... We all pay a huge price for pushing ourselves into an extraordinary place, but it does happen.

was predominantly local with some 'art'

FEB 2016 PC: 'In the process I was very continues. The story should definitely live on.' mindful: this is your place but using my PD & ST: Plan project close and training expertise, how can we bring these two together? for Strood participants hosted at Ideas Test. Support **CO** and **RE** in organising a closing be very exciting to take it further.'

Phoebe Davies (PD) Sam Trotman (ST) OOTO Places rogramme Producers

> FEB — MAR 2015 PD & ST: Casual onica Cordier (VD), Michael Dale (MD) ure Start Centre and school clubs).
>
> PD & ST: Bring in photographer Fo

Ain't Got No Fear

Mikhail Karikis (мк)

FEB — MAR 2015 MK: Initial conv

APR 2015 MK: Sends portfolio to PD & ST.

MAY — JUN 2015 MK: First trip to Gr

and rave areas. He is made aware of differ

volved in rayes

o: we decided to go ahead. It took a while t

sisting him as a producer. They go back to t

**MK:** Films at rave: 'Had conversations w

risers about rave culture: discussed

iterested in working with subcultures and

local festival' The police come and the rave is

eally felt for the kids.' **MK** has an exchange with

the police and the kids, supporting them, but also acknowledging the police's position. 'It wa a difficult situation: there was a conversation

bout sabotaging versus facilitation.' The ra

n contact with local rave organisers to range a meeting and to find out when tl

OCT 2015 MK: Meets producer and the

small experiments' funding. They agree that they will send **MK** a list of potential musicians who they'd like to run workshops. 'We set date:

to them, it didn't work out.' One of **MK's** initi

MK: Workshop are held at library in Grai

ple turn up. 'We also found that the public

due to other life situations and not manuscus

28 NOV 2015 MK: Two day music worksh

young people] came to the workshop throug

ome food.' They have food together, start

dancing, rapping and beatboxing and becon part of the performance, film and screening

ut). The event was important to establish new

ew group of kids. At the screening they c

village hall. 'The young people start performing and doing things they don't want anybody else o see. They enter a flow '

MK: States that more time is needed for

FEB — JUN 2016 MK: Coi

and filming with young people, working in the workshop

onnections.' Kids from the Grain Remix

12 DEC 2015 MK: Mobile cin

hove were "disturbine" (or so they thought)

s of the rave. Explains his

NOV 2015 MK: Workshops start. Times and NOV 2015 CH: Attends workshops, spend

JAN 2016 MK: Continues to do workshops JAN 2016 CH: Whiststable Biennale support

nporarily shut down. 'I became ver

e of the rave and bump into the organise

JULY MK: 'Some

lichael Dale (MD). Find traces of a recent fire

PD & SI: Bring in photographer Feli Crawshaw (FC) to take portraits of local PD & ST: Aware of Whitstable Biennale intention of working beyond Whitstable and the Biennale structure. **PD & ST** are ke for Ideas Test to develop partnerships with Kent-based contemporary arts organisati

MAR 2015 PD: Meets with Whitstabl

**APR 2015 PD & ST:** Skyp of artists created. Shortlisting based on the artists' skills to work with communities Working in Grain is seen as challenging. 'One of the criteria was the ability for the artist to work in a location with no arts infrastructure, in an isolated location'

**ST:** 'There is a history of Grain being a setting for commercial, film, photogr les of artworks. Local resident **MD** gi

tour of coastal park and mentions a locati that this is ok as long as they 'tidy up'.

PD & ST: Meet with SJ to discuss short!

MK is discussed due to his work, highlighti PD & ST: Skype conversation with MK to discuss his way of working with people

MAY — JUN 2015 ST: Introduce MK to some of the community 'activators' /
'gate-keepers' e.g. local councillors **VD** and
Discussions are had about the differing Places, the artist and Whitstable Biennale

JULY 2105 PD: Meets SF, SJ, Hannah

be completed by Dec 2015 with **MK's** worl swever they must meet ideas Test's approad iscuss whether **MK** feels that his practice

Whitstable Biennale and **MK** agree they are happy to work with OOTO's aims and discuss the need for on-the-ground outreach

PD & ST: Inform local contacts that MK is starting the commission. 'We should ha the handover to **MK** when he started worki

SEP 2015 PD & ST: Offer additional su

artwork for Dec. The public workshop date

eld at St James's Church on Grain.

PD & ST: OOTO Places team distribut

12 DEC 2015 MK's work screened in a obile Vintage Cinema, alongside films abou ain and on the theme of 'sub-culture'.

JAN 2016 PD & ST: Reflect there could have the Whitstable Biennale team about timeli for sharing of the work / work in progress

ouild up to the Biennale in June.

FEB — JUN 2016 PD & ST: OOTO Plac ontract ends. Ideas Test continue working from **MK'S** project to the Biennale.

July 2015 — June 2016 Isle of Grain

Catherine Herbert (CH) whitstable Biennal

2012 CH: Worked at Kent County Counc

la Mhitatakla Dianaala towasted in avnanding their near

2013 — 2014 CH: In contact with with Stephanie Fuller (**SF**) (Director, Ideas Test). **CH** articulated her interest in developing

(SJ) (Director, Whitstable Biennale) about

fartists. MK's name is put forward by S CH: SJ contacts MK to find out if he

MAY — JUNE 2015 CH: SJ attends first

**JULY CH:** Principle is set that **MK** is free

would be away in August.

CH: Whitstable Biennale puts freels

cH: Supports MK and producer. MK

**SEP 2015 CH:** Contract signed betw

MK and WB. PD requests that all public OCT 2015 CH: Freelance producer pulls out

12 DEC 2015 CH: Whitstable Bienna

FEB — JUN 2016 CH: Whitstable

MAY — SEP 2015 PD & ST: Meet bi-weekly

preparation for artwork.

**SEP 2015** PD & ST: Passing Through intervention happens 3 September. OOTO Places team advertise workshops and events

**OCT** — **DEC 2015** ST: 'Hearing people's experiences was really key – it kept pushing

OCT 2015 PD & ST: Implement on-the ground marketing. Distribute posters, flyers, brochures and online, led by Joanne Matthews (JM). Jack Ivory (JI) helps with promoting the event, speaking with lots of young people. Deciding the location for the events is

The work is presented with writing from a range of people. '[Lucy's] conceptual writing [was] not altered for an audience. For Spotligh Lucy's accompanying conceptual piece of writing was performed by Lewis and Jack, [who] enjoyed the complexities of the work.'

PD & ST: Support project manager with production co-ordination and delivery. NOV 2015 PD & ST: Support project management. **JM** supports with audience

**JAN** — **FEB 2016** PD & ST: Begin to plan project close and 'moving forward' event for Sittingbourne participants at No 34

Skies film for screening at various venues.

May – November 20<u>15</u> Sittingbourne

By Lucy Joyce

Jack Ivory (JI) Gerard Norton (GN) Participants

**MAR 2015** Studio meeting with Phoebe Davies and Sam Trotman (**PD & ST**).

APR 2015 LJ: Visits Sittingbourne twice s really important for my practice... and an ortunity to test things out; specifically given interest in working outside of gallery spaces,

**Blue Skies** 

Lucy Joyce (LJ)

Phoebe Davies (PD)

Programme Producers

JAN 2015 PD & ST: Initial meetings wit

Cafe, Skillnet, SFM Radio, Diversity House,

Swale CVS), young people, and communit

PD & ST: Host a stall in the Forum Shopping Centre with volunteers from Phoenix House

question: 'What is your out of the ordinary plac

n Sittingbourne?' There are a variety of places

highlighted, people talk about the high street both in positive and negative light; seems to be the hub for the community. SFM make field

ecording of research and play on local radio

FEB 2015 PD & ST: Bring together various

groups and individuals to form an Advisory

Group, between 6-10 members, diverse in

the group decide they want to see proposals

MAR 2015 PD & ST: Studio visits with artists.

Group. People start getting excited about the

APR 2015 PD & ST: Propose a shortlist

of four artists (Lucy Joyce, Evan Ifekoya, Bhabak Hashemi-Nezhad and Wayward Plants). Artists are given a pack of research information from

PD & ST's findings. Each artist is paid to develop

a proposal in one month, including two site

visits, and invited to meet the Advisory Grou

The proposal sharing takes place on 23 April in the form of a public meeting at UK Paper; 60–70 people attend. The artists are n

proposals, with text, images, videos. The

to the public and facilitating conversation discuss the artwork. Mix of different opinions

n the room about what the co

and who they are for.

proposals are read out. At each station there

are members of the Advisory Group respondin

Following day, the Advisory Group meet

bringing information gathered from the public meeting. The group discuss the proposals in context of the aims and objectives of the projec

OOTO or NOOTO' (Out of the Ordinary or NOT

Out of the Ordinary?) Following a four-hour

meeting the group select the artist. LJ's

ts cultural activity and responses to the

Sam Trotman (ST)

OOTO Places

of activating places. Initial proposal focuses on empty spaces and disused buildings, using a backdrop blue sky as a main feature.

LJ: Remembers getting a call from PD & ST:
'I didn't think my work was going to be picked.'

MAY 2015 Starts work on the project ipported by producer Elizabeth Graham **(EG)**. introducing Lucy and letting them know how o get involved in the project. Predomina why **LJ** is doing this and what the purpose

JUN 2015 LJ: Local primary school vorkshops. The children use mirrors to reflect circles of light onto buildings lisused shop on high street from private estate ents for workshop space

JUL — AUG 2015 LJ: Pulse Cafe workshops, live radio interviews with SFM and ng postponed and set back till Nov 201

**SEP 2015** LJ: Assisted by Helen Turner (HT). LJ & HT visit all shops on the high street, invite shop managers to partake in Passing Through the "mega" curtain hung in the estate just off the high street.' Multiple community membe nteracted with the curtains and offered help

LJ: Meets with EG lighting technician

**LJ:** Does interview for SFM Radio with **EG**.

OCT — DEC 2015 EG: Collects Hopes and Wishes from local residents for Backdrop II.

OCT 2015 LJ: Spotlight performed at South o try out new ways of communica and it was presented by local teenagers Jack

LJ: Backdrop I open public workshop public workshop at Pulse Cafe. *Billboard I* ental moment' goes live on Station

NOV 2015 JL: Billboard II, 'I've started omething' goes live.

Backdrop I, installation of blue flags
in garden of residential house.

Backdrop II, 'confetti cannons' explodin eople's wishes onto the high street Hopes and wishes' texts collected from llong with a playlist of songs relating to wishe A series of texts written in response to the projects concepts by **LJ** and invited writers is made available for people to take away from

LJ: Blue Skies film screening at the local

**DEC 2015 LJ:** Does radio interview

JAN — FEB 2016 LJ: 'I've never been

ended - lots of things I would continus.' LJ feels responsibility as an artist. It's not just about creating work and leaving, 'it was about creating before... art is not just one thing, like sculpture in Sittingbourne – 'a sort of landmark'. perspect

FEB 2015 GN: Meets Phoebe Davies and Sam Trotman (PD & ST) at Pulse Cafe GN is asked to sit on the Advisory Board.

**APR 2015 GN:** Attends the public meeting ls decision making panel to decide on the

JUN 2015 GN: An image of Lucy Joyce's (LJ)

work is published in the Pulse Cafe magazine

JUL — AUG 2015 GN: Takes part

SEP 2015 JI: Worksat Forsters, a shop

am **(EG)** when they ask to put the golden

ains in the shop window. Once installed,

on that day we got so many people stopping and

spite finding it 'weird': 'It sounds interesting

sations with customers ... quite a lot

OCT — DEC 2015 JI: Describes himself

ven his interest in event managemen

as 'not an arty person, but maybe there

he decides to get involved with the event

logistics and gets young people from his

**OCT 2015 JI:** Describes *Spotlight* as a

choreography of lights made by people – lots

of people gathered in the high street – mixed

reactions with people stopping, looking confused'. JI reads out (performs) letter to the audience live to over 20 local residents with his

NOV 2015 JI: Helps support the Backdrop

the highlight among all the events. He is then

want to find out what was happening and who

approached on social media by people who

would clean up the street after the cannons.

**DEC 2015 JI:** 'Some people involved in

brought them together as a celebration.'

me involved in art, that has never happened

a painting... it is about learning about different ways of life. You look at things from different

the projects have never met before; this project

omething fun to do ... it made a lot of

MAR 2015 ST & PD: Site visit with Felicit Crawshaw **(FC)** (project photographer), walk around Iwade with local residents, witness the epic landscapes and new housing developm ST & PD: 'How can we work with what is on artist that could work here? How do we bu

Phoebe Davies (PD)

Programme Producers

SEP 2014 PD & ST: Online research, phor

Meet James Hunt (JH) to get an idea of what

in Iwade. JH has been living in Iwade fo

o to 1.600 houses since the mid-1990

FEB 2015 ST & PD: Meet local residents in

pub and present examples of socially engaged art projects, outlining possibilities for the shape of an off-site project 'working with the knowledge and context of a place and working with an artist'.

Sam Trotman (ST)

OOTO Places

ST & PD: After a few meetings with th parish council, **PD & ST** decide it's the right

or stay? There aren't structured public space

We are interested to use the landscape and

widely.

ST & PD: Conversations with memb

State community about the purpose of the funding, opening up dialogue about wh is possible and what they want. Difference producers. 'Maybe an artist can use the practice to go down this path, between traditional and contemporary'

ST & PD: Due to the recurring themes of old, new and transient communities, off an his own voice his own assumptions and th risk of 'mis-representation' of a commur online, **ST** approaches Richard Houguez (**RH**) to talk about the commission, 'because of h wade parish boundaries are continuously Jhianastianastalia amatataratian and HW: Does workshops and makes two film in Iwade, one with the drama club and anothe

JUN 2015 ST & PD: RH's artist contract is

AUG 2015 PD & ST: Print deadline for the her trolley with part of the golden curtain.

> AUG — OCT 2015 ST: Simone Kenyon ( (producer) comes on board to help prepare t events at the Barn.

ST: OOTO Places team advertise ever PD & ST: Wend Iwade walks take place

excited to see new ways of using the barn.

FEB 2016 PD & ST: Work on project close,

developing strategy for how publication and

25 OCT 2015 ST: We Were// We Are// We Will event takes place in Iwade Barn. "The barn every seem of all the work and conversations, however it also felt like

e on for longer; it felt like a beginning Γhe barn event was also a starting point

HW: The publication aims to istributed through the community

Richard Houguez (RH) ames Hunt (лн)

Holly White (HW) ollaborating Artist

Lead Artist

MAR 2015 RH: Accepts th

HW: Has conversations with RH ab

film-making, 'but Richard was still figuring

from old Iwade, the farming community,

RH is more interested in the consultation

process, rather than a set of outcom

AUG 2015 RH: Starts to develop idea

of one-to-one wends (walks) and he finds ou

iat there is a local group who 'beat the boun very year. As an outsider RH isn't sure abou

itation for people to take me on walks

in Iwade. Goes on a walk with **RH** and meets

RH & HW: Meet archeologist Kyle Lee-

ially through social media. Also thro

Wend Iwade

Davies (PD & ST). 8 OCT 2014 JH: Invites PD & ST to attend a parish meeting to discuss possibilities of

Rynn Kemp (RK)

Sandra Wilkinson (sw)

**SEP 2014 JH:** Hasn't heard of Ideas Test

May 2015 — February 2016

lwade

By Richard Houguez

FEB 2015 JH: Advertis re mixed, with different ideas about what th nd thinking about the groups present in Iwa

**RK:** Was present at the parish meeting. s interested in what happens in the vina ot involved wasn't about the art particular

MAR 2015 JH: There is uncertainty about what the project outcomes will be, both from the community and producers, as artist not brought in yet. **RK & JH** and other residents have portrait photographs taken by Fell Crawshaw **(FC)** in locations in Iwade.

MAY 2015 JH: Process starts to develop an just do it, see where it goes.' Some local he. Parallel to this a group of local reciden 22 JUN 2015 RH: Meets James Hunt (JH)

> AUG 2015 JH: 'We didn't want the project to forget the history of "old Iwade", we wan it to show that it's not just a modern housir **RK:** Was the first to go on a wend with **RH**.

hey walked from Moat Farm Cottages over notion of falcolumnia in the study. There alking itself wasn't unfamilier Chief silence, and giving time and space to cons

lo's perception of permissions. He is als

RH: Begins to use the Iwade Barn, an old agricultural barn which the housing developer RH approaches KLC to write a creative and old Iwade, new Iwade and future Iwade. RH speaks to Maxie Gedge (MG) about running a folk song workshop, folk being a 'place-

OCT 2015 RH: Films a promotional video

25 OCT 2015 RH & HW: We Were/ the handover of a Grade Il listed barn from ludes video-works, postcards, audio-work rruit smootnie bar, nistory of mapping and a public outcome but the project

DEC 2015 — JAN 2016 RH & HW: organising schools workshops, looking at pas

more walks with the form shop owner

RK: In discussion with RH and OOTO laces about distributing excerpts from ublication with the Iwade Observer, a l

FEB 2016 JH: The barn event felt like th

**25 OCT 2015 JH:** Helps support the bar

on the day. 'Even though it had two month

here were people attending who never too

Same people were not sure if they could tal

it was a starting point for something to de

song for Iwade at the barn event.

'It was surprising... I don't think the vill
has appreciated there was something arty

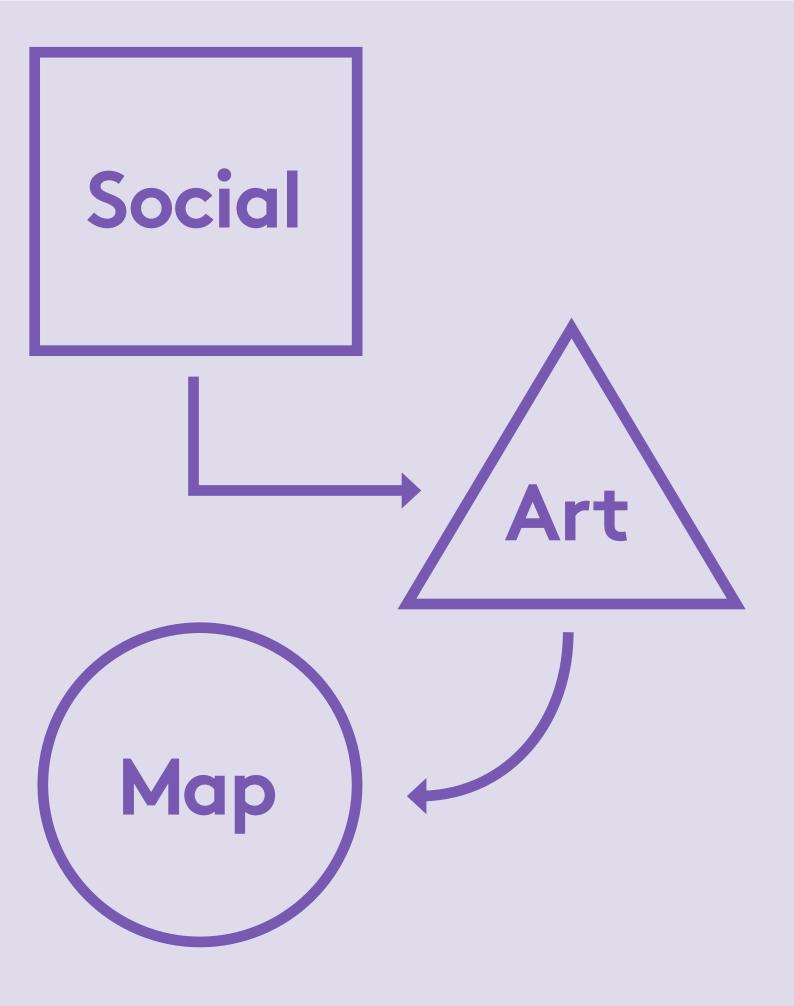
**SW:** Takes part in writing lyrics for the folk

going on... it has triggered off enthusiasm and

happened at the barn would possibly be see

**DEC 2015** — **JAN 2016** PD: Brok RH & HW: Host a series of film workshop FEB 2016 MK: Young people take MK FEB 2016 DH: 'What's going to happen? stice (22 Dec) at Temple Manor. Audience JAN 2016 PD & ST: Receives postcard JAN 2016 LJ: Sends limited edition postcard

JAN 2016 JJ & GN: Receive postcard edition Do you have plans? This is a story that cann be told anywhere else. People from Strood editions from **LJ**, co-ordinated by **JM**. pack to all project participants. from LJ. de. They start writing lyrics to a song and audiences. Everyone given a free copy of the are currently creating a music video. It is a wa FEB 2016 CO: 'I had lots of the No Tail programme. 'It would be an absolute to learn some local history. Could we pass this participants asking me, "So what's next?" on to schools: JAN — FEB 2016 GN: Pulse Cafe continues **SM:** 'It would be good to do workshops



Mapping Four Art Commissions in Swale & Medway, North Kent

# Introduction and Reflections on Mapping Four Art Commissions in Swale & Medway, North Kent

By Sophie Hope with Stefania Donini

This document provides a partial snapshot of Ideas Test's Out of the Oridinary Places commissions that took place in Strood, Isle of Grain, Sittingbourne and Iwade in Swale and Medway, North Kent, England in 2015–16. The purpose is not to evaluate the impact of the projects, or whether they succeed or fail in their aims and objectives. Rather it is to map the complexities of the processes involved in developing art projects in these particular places.

The information gathered here was generated during four half-day workshops in February 2016, each focusing on one of the art projects and involved artists, curators, producers, collaborators and participants who told their own stories of the beginnings, middles and ends of the process. Sophie Hope and Stefania Donini facilitated the workshops, mapping the process on a long piece of paper. The conversations were audio recorded, transcribed and edited to make the digests in this publication.

During the workshops, we encouraged honesty and diversity of opinion, acknowledging there were different interpretations and perspectives around the table. There were things that were left unsaid and project contributors not present at the table who would have brought alternative viewpoints. The editing process can also lead to simplifying the narrative in a way that misses some of the nuances and tones of voice that might reveal other sides of the story. The aim of the workshops and this document, however, is not to reach consensus about what happened but to try and retain some of the complexity and contradictions in working practices and experiences of participation. The result is a set of fragmentary narratives of a particular group of people, at a particular moment in time, reflecting on their experiences. We hope this glimpse into the world of these projects from different perspectives, alongside other documentation and traces of the work, will provide an insight into commissioning art in Swale and Medway that may be useful to those of you initiating, practicing and exploring something out of the ordinary.

This method of working stems from the Social Art Map, a resource that Sophie Hope developed with Emily Druiff at Peckham Platform, London, where they mapped five socially engaged art commissions in London. The resulting into eight locations in Swale and Medway to realise the

timelines were subsequently published as a way of providing windows into the different processes, hurdles, motivations and experiences of artists, curators, commissioners, locals, participants, and collaborators (see www.socialartmap.org.uk). This document uses this mapping method to develop four more timelines.

The Social Art Map process revealed the diversity of

approaches to making art happen in different contexts. There is no single way of commissioning, curating and carrying out socially engaged art, and nor could there be. With Ideas Test's OOTO Places commissions, this also became apparent. Producers Sam Trotman and Phoebe Davies wanted to explore different approaches for each of the projects: in Strood the community trusted in the programmers' instinct; in Sittingbourne a local Advisory Board selected an artist's proposal following a public meeting; in Grain the work was co-commissioned with a Kent based cultural organisation (Whitstable Biennale) and in Iwade they carried out a longer speculative research process before choosing the artist. A pantomime, series of public interventions, an exhibition in a barn and films were the culminations of months of meetings, workshops, walks and talks between curators, producers, artists and local people. While some artists had an idea of what they wanted to do before arriving, others found that the focus and methods emerged through listening and being in the place.

Ideas Test is an arts organisation set up to 'empower communities in Swale and Medway to live more creative lives' and 'increase opportunities for everyone to take part in the arts in ways they choose'. Ideas Test is supported by the Arts Council's Creative People and Places programme, a £37 million publicly funded investment into 21 places around England which have been identified by the Arts Council as areas where there is low adult participation in the arts, with the aim of increasing the likelihood of participation.

The overall timeframe of the OOTO Places programme was short, running from the end of summer 2014 to the end of 2015. Producers Sam and Phoebe were appointed in September 2014 by Ideas Test to undertake research

OOTO Places commissions. On 28 November 2014 there was a panel discussion made up of community catalysts, local arts organisations and representatives from the national art sector, which selected four of these places in which the commissions would happen. The next six months involved Sam and Phoebe doing a lot of groundwork, meeting people in the different places, identifying 'gate-keepers' and prepping the ground for the artists to start work. This involved informal conversations, many cups of tea and getting a sense of the existing arts activities and cultural infrastructure (or lack of it) in each place. During this research stage Sam and Phoebe asked questions including: Are there groups willing to engage? What kind of infrastructures are in place? The lack of infrastructure (e.g. communal public and commercial spaces and services) is not something an arts project can solve. Rather the projects happened through informal structures that could support them, such as Facebook groups, key networked individuals to avoid people retreating or giving up on the process. and existing community organisations. The projects also relied on chance encounters, such as finding a poster in a Chinese takeaway or an artist asking if they could hang a golden curtain in a shop doorway.

Artists were commissioned at different stages in 2015 and their projects ran until December 2015 and beyond. It is perhaps no surprise that two of the projects (in Grain and Iwade) spread well into 2016. The open, fluid process that many of the artists worked through, together with the relationships continue? time it takes to gain the trust of people locally, meant that in practice the process was more flexible. This fluidity of practices comes up against funding structures, accounting to explore and try out other ways of working that might and auditing processes. Indeed, this short timeframe led to intense working practices and conversations being cut short. What felt like the beginning of a process in fact had to become the end, or at least officially. Funding aims for audience-building differed from the aims of the artists' practices which often focused on forging fewer, more specific, longer term relationships.

In a way, each of the projects interrogated the assumptions of what is meant by engagement and participation and how art can be understood differently and exist unexpectedly in everyday spaces. The places were approached with curiosity and sensitivity – not assuming no/low engagement, but that there are forms of cultural engagement that may be hidden and just not visible to the data gathering efforts of the funders in identifying areas of low engagement. Indeed, one of the artists remarked on how, despite Iwade being of supposedly low engagement, it is an inherently creative, social place. Artists were asking unusual questions, introducing surprising visual interruptions, exploring hidden histories and focusing on self-organised, unofficial activities rather than on the dominant narratives that people tell themselves or can

be told about the places they live. These are all ways of getting under the surface of a place and piqued the interest of neighbours and passers by. This is where something 'out of the ordinary' emerges. There is a commitment to try things out that otherwise might not happen, or be seen to happen.

But what does it mean for people to engage in unknown, uncertain and unpredictable experiences? If you are facing difficult life circumstances it might be harder to 'step into the dark', especially if this involves a lot of volunteer labour. For others, the drive to meet people and find out more about the place where they live might be a motivation to get involved. Not knowing what is going to happen next can be exhilarating, tiring and trying. These unpredictable encounters, if they are to be sustained (even in the short term) need 'holding' by commissioners, artists, producers, curators, facilitators, These acts of non-participation are also often beyond the control of anyone involved. Life intervenes.

These projects brought out the fact that there is nothing ordinary about a place. Each project pushed people to experience the places they live in and move through in different ways. Many questioned the legacy of these transient moments: What is left behind when the circus leaves town? What happens next and how do the

We hope these maps will offer insights and inspiration tease out the extraordinary from the everyday to see what could happen next.

Practice-based researcher, Lecturer in Film, Media and Cultural Studies Department, Birkbeck, University of London

Stefania Donini Research and workshop assistant

Thanks to all the contributors to the mapping workshops and to Phoebe Davies, Sam Trotman, Joanne Matthews and Stefania Donini for making this mapping process happen.

## **About Out of the Ordinary Places**

Out of the Ordinary Places (OOTO Places) is an Ideas Test programme working in four areas of North Kent where commissioned artists created projects shaped by people and place. Developed to enable more people to get involved in the arts, four new projects took place in Iwade, Sittingbourne, Strood and the Isle of Grain. OOTO Places explores how local residents and artists can co-create new and experimental work that re-imagines and challenges perceptions of place and, in turn, raises wider social and political questions.

www.ootoplaces.co.uk Phoebe Davies & Sam Trotman

Programme producers

Hannah Standen  $Interim\ programme\ producer$ 

Joanne Matthews Maternity cover producer and marketing co-ordinator

Tom Merrell Graphic design

Felicity Crawshaw Photography

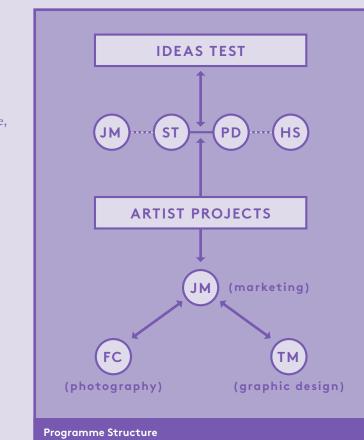
During the project Phoebe Davies took a two-month sabbatical for a British Council Fellowship to Portland State University (USA) to work on the Art Social Practice MFA, during which time Hannah Standen took over her role. In December 2015 Sam Trotman went on maternity leave and Joanne Matthews took on her role until March 2016.

### **About Ideas Test**

Ideas Test is an arts organisation working hand-in-hand with communities in Swale and Medway empowering them to live more creative lives. Ideas Test uses arts and creativity to support people to develop new skills, feel better about themselves and their community, and make their area a more attractive place to live and work.

Ideas Test supports people who want to participate in the arts but need help to fulfil their ambitions – as both audience members and participants. They also work with community organisations, promoters and event organisers who want to make their local community a better place, as well as artists, creative professionals, and creative businesses with an interest in Swale and Medway who want to create great work in partnership with our communities.

www.ideastest.co.uk @ideastest www.facebook.com/ideastest













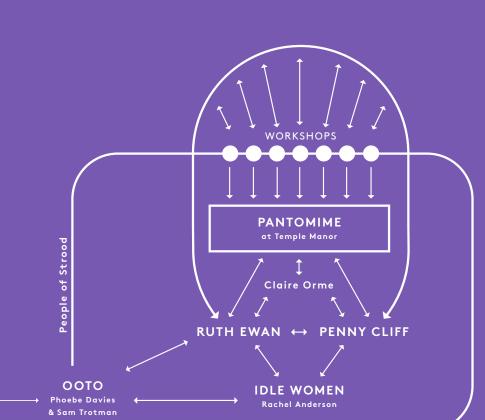


May 2015 — February 2016

By Richard Houguez

No Tail

April — December 2015 Strood By Ruth Ewan



## Overview

Site-specific pantomime performance on the winter solstice in the 13<sup>th</sup> century building, Temple Manor. Co-written by artist Ruth Ewan with director Penny Cliff, and produced by idle women. The pantomime was co-created and performed by Strood residents in theatre performance, lighting, music, set and costume design, prop-making and puppetry. (Dom Coyote, Cis O'Boyle, Bernd Fauler, James Frost and Rachel Anderson with research by Astrid Johnston)

Ideas Test - OOTO Places www.ootoplaces.co.uk/places/strood

## Mapped By:

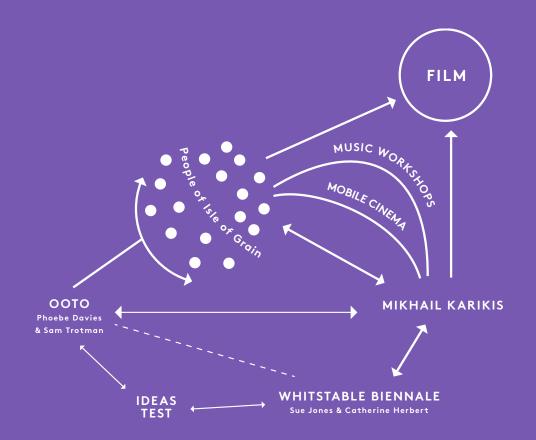
Phoebe Davies OOTO Places progamme producer Penny Cliff

# Project contributor, local resident, performer

Project contributor, local resident, performer Sophy Millington Project contributor, local resident, props and costume

# Ain't Got No Fear

July 2015 — June 2016 Isle of Grain By Mikhail Karikis



## Overview

Project research and development, a series of workshops with groups of young people on the Isle of Grain, researching underground music and sub-cultures. A public event and film screening, including special footage filmed on Grain with local young people. The film, developed by artist Mikhail Karikis with local young people, will be shared on the Isle of Grain and at the Whitstable Biennale in 2016.

## Commissioner

Ideas Test - OOTO Places www.ootoplaces.co.uk/places/isle-of-grain

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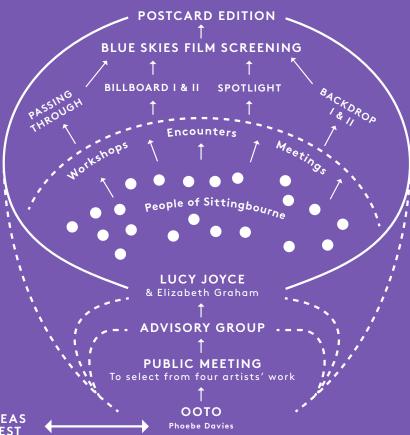
Sam Trotman & Phoebe Davies OOTO Places progamme producers

Deputy director, Whitstable Biennale

Ideas Test - OOTO Places

# **Blue Skies**

Mav — November 2015 Sittingbourne By Lucy Joyce



## Overview

Series of public performances, events, happenings and public billboards created by Lucy Joyce in collaboration with local residents and participants to explore and re-imagine Sittingbourne's public spaces. The final film, Blue Skies, screened at the New Century Cinema, features footage, images and sound, including the conversations, workshops, performances and installations resulting from open workshops and research with local community groups. A set of limited edition postcards have also been given to the project participants.

## Commissioner

www.ootoplaces.co.uk/places/sittingbourne

Mapped By:

Sam Trotman & Phoebe Davies OOTO Places progamme producers

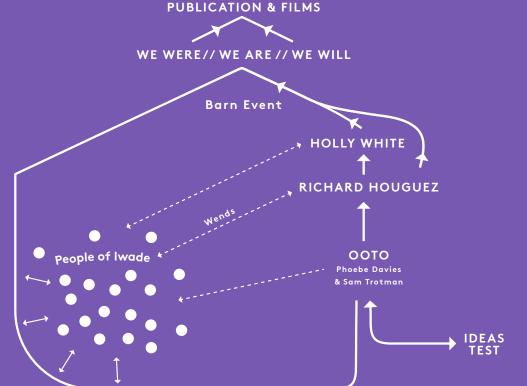
Jack Ivory Project collaborator, local resident

Project collaborator, Skillnet volunteer,

Project participants, Skillnet staff member

Wend Iwade

PUBLICATION & FILMS



## Overview

Guided walks, workshops, live events, a film series and a research-based process led by artist Richard Houguez in collaboration with Holly White. Richard also collaborated with Maxie Gedge and archaeologist Kyle Lee-Crossett, PhD candidate on UCL's Assembling Alternative Futures for Heritag a programme of open workshops exploring 'deep future scenarios' and public events with artists, musicians, archeologists and residents in the Iwade Barn, a Grade ll listed barn given to the local community by housing developers Ward Homes.

# Commissioner

Ideas Test - OOTO Places www.ootoplaces.co.uk/places/iwade

# Mapped By:

Sam Trotman & Phoebe Davies OOTO Places progamme producers Richard Houguez

Holly White

Project contributor, local resident, chairman of the parish council

Project contributor, local resident, member of team that edits and distributes The Iwade Observer

Project contributor, local resident