

Factory Nights 2009-2010
New Commissions / New Collaborations

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Factory Nights is a series of inspiring working sessions for ANY visual artists, photographers, writers, poets, musicians, filmmakers and any other creatives.

Factory Nights is not a discussion event, seminar or workshop.

Factory Nights are free sessions that simply provide an opportunity for creative people to come together in an interesting venue and supportive environment to make work or initiate ideas. Artists can come to the sessions with something they have been working on or could start something brand new, inspired by the space.

Factory Nights is developed and curated by rednile Projects and supports their practise as artists.

Factory Nights Introduction—Steve Wright

Bearing in mind that this was one of the coldest days of a particularly bleak November, you'd have been forgiven for turning it down: the chance to spend an hour or two on an exposed concrete structure in the middle of a housing estate, somewhere in County Durham between the Cathedral and the Coast – that's assuming you manage to find it in the first place. Whoever thought this was a good idea?

Quite a lot of people, as it turned out; the first in a new season of Factory Nights at Victor Pasmore's Apollo Pavilion in Peterlee was soon over-booked, with a waiting list. Artists from across the region made the journey, braved the elements, learned the history of this pioneering fusion of art and architecture, retreated to the Community Centre for hot drinks – and talked for so long that the event over-ran and I almost missed my train back to London. Something is going on here that requires explanation; something that rednile Projects, their funders and collaborators, and the artists who attend Factory Nights have all recognised as valuable – whatever the weather.

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Artists working in the North East are not starved of opportunities. Supported and sustained by universities and colleges, arts organisations, galleries, facilities and networks, the contemporary art scene has enough to offer that artists might think twice before committing themselves to a Sunday afternoon in Peterlee when there are other and easier ways to meet up. Certainly, Factory Nights are not the only dish on the menu – but they have a distinctive flavour that's proving palatable to a wide range of creative people, one that's hard to find anywhere else. It seems to me that this is down to two main ingredients: firstly, Factory Nights aim to deliver something unique without ever quite defining what that 'something' is. From their first proposal at a Board meeting back in 2007, it was easiest to define them in terms of what they were *not* to be; neither a discussion event, nor seminar nor workshop, but a chance to make work and network within an environment that's likely to inspire creativity.

Secondly, rednile's inclusive approach to their audience means that Factory Nights are promoted as free and open to all creative people, not just visual artists – and certainly not just 'the usual suspects'. Regulars make a huge contribution to the success and stability of these gatherings but there's no question of them forming a clique. Factory Nights offer a point of entry for those who do not feel that they belong to any kind of contemporary art 'scene', through the creation of a supportive and welcoming environment. But these aren't simply 'alternative' events for 'non-scene' artists, and those who do work the region's exhibition previews, talks and seminars will meet interesting people whom they would not otherwise meet. This may not sound like much of a boast but it's at the very heart of the project; there are more artists in Hebburn and Heworth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Rednile believe that by exposing these hidden communities of creative people through collaboration with local businesses and funding bodies, they help to strengthen the arts within the region, demonstrating the value of engagement with artists through direct

exposure to their enthusiasm and ideas. The money set aside for 'New Collaborations' within this second series of Factory Nights will allow participants to return to the host venue, working with them on what could well be the first commission of its kind for one or both parties. This potential to develop new work beyond the evening itself was tested with the first Factory Night at Wallsend's Mecca Bingo, a former cinema in streamlined Art Deco style. 'Factory Nights by Day' brought artists back to the building during the Wallsend Festival to carry out proposals developed from the initial event. Given the limited amount of time available during Factory Nights, subsequent projects like this help to give something back to the host, showing how artists can respond to the site and the people who use it with imagination and sensitivity.

The location for each event is carefully chosen and plays a part as vital as that of rednile and the people who attend. Because they move to a new venue each time, Factory Nights have allowed rednile to work with different local authorities, building and developing strong working relationships. Each new location attracts a new range of artists, the Peterlee event firmly supported by East Durham Artists' Network (EDAN), many of whom won't have been to previous Factory Nights in North Tyneside and Sunderland. This is good for the events themselves, giving each its own distinct character both through the fresh mix of artists attending and the unique qualities of the venue. The Factory Night in the refurbished Water Board Building in Sunderland was the most like a social event, easy and comfortable in splendid surroundings, whereas Hendon's Queen Street Masonic Temple inspired one of the quietest and best, participants reaching for the sketchbooks supplied in order to capture something of its astonishing interior. These are, in the main, places that we would never normally go to – where we shall find people whom we might not otherwise meet.

So, those who found their way to Peterlee and braved the elements had their efforts rewarded – and the Factory Nights programme, flexible as it is, continues to develop with each new session. I don't envisage an increase in numbers because Factory Nights will lose their intimacy and approachability with a large group of people, besides the limited space available at some of the sites. But in terms of energy, production of drawings and site-specific work, future commissions and the continued support of rednile's funders, the potential is huge. It's the artists who come along who can really make a difference, so next time the opportunity arises, book early, put on your winter coat – and make it a Factory Night.

Steve Wright is a London-based painter. Born in Bath in 1975, he studied at Wimbledon School of Art and Newcastle University where he completed his MFA in 2001. He has recently exhibited at the Morley Gallery, London and as part of *Deptford X*. Steve returned to London in 2009 after ten years in Newcastle upon Tyne. In 2007 he was appointed to rednile's Board of Directors and soon afterwards exhibited work in their *Up to Now* exhibition at the National Glass Centre and has been an enthusiastic participant in the *Factory Nights* programme.



Shop—Paul Summers

there are ghosts
in the safety glass;
obese & smile-less,
trapped like genies
in cages of nostalgia.
& like i've never been away,
thirty seven years dissolve;
i am staring at a beige
camille bra & pants set,
imagining them occupied
& laden with mystery.
the dada-ist has wrapped himself
in a fast-fit ironing board cover
but no-one has noticed.
undeterred, he contemplates
sculpting a replacement head
from a memory foam mattress.
save pounds, loose pounds,
cheap rounds, pet sounds,
coffee grounds peppering
the sheen of your perfect teeth.
8 the strip-lights spill their sepia stains
& everyone is glossed with a watery
burnt sienna , like an alcoholics' eyes
or a lazy students' piss-stained bog.
an anorexic stares at a rank of yuletide logs,
& i'm drawn to a pair of porcelain dogs
sniffing at the trim of a chinzy lamp-shade:
what would sigmund make of all this?
there are elephants in the room.
they masquerade, they wear our faces,
mimicking our voices, conjuring up places
where saccharin memories fill the gaps
like 70's, sun-bleached **truprint** snaps
mam preferred the co-op's fake-tan pine
this shop is someone else's past, not mine.
bulimic **barbie** in a gold prom frock,
a stylish **ken hom** non-stick wok,
union jack cuff links & leatherette,
broken marriages & bad debt,
famous names & **tampax**,
hornby trains & heroin tracks,
asbestos dust & hair,
vitreous enamelware,
countless short-lived crazes,
posh **beau brummell** blazers,
dark mahogany **formica**,
a 1:72 scale **airfix** model
of the soviet space-dog laika,
the all new, all improved,
saddam hussein, cloven-hooved
w.m.d. chemistry set,
a rabies-ridden virtual pet,
a melancholic santa claus
posing with a chequers board
surrounded by a grinning board
of overly made-up midgets.
*god bless ye merry gentlemen,
let nothing ye dismay...*
& in the backroom
reek of dust & damp
where in between each
foot-fall creak, you speak
your tales of isamabard,
the tramp with jam-jar geys,
on the road, his thursday schleps

to share in the warmth of
late-night shoppers' breath.
& then, the mannequin morgue,
a shadowy smorgasbord
of severed star-jump limbs
framing the pert arse
of michelangelo's david.
power balls & cap guns,
milky coffees, pink iced buns,
miniature zulus & blu-loos,
a battle-group of kangaroos
& polar bears in plastic tanks,
a tinny tannoy soundtrack
of "**christmas with the unthinks**"
not unlike a dozen cheap kazoos
played through the arse-cracks
of a swarm of drunken squaddies.
& always wrestling, as i am,
with the tension between
attention seeker & altruist
i toy with the notion of creating
a prize-winning photo opportunity
by spiking myself in the knackers
with a **playmobil** narwhal.
luckily, for all protagonists
i decided against it.
"*& this is sally from zapf,
she is soft, & interactive.*"
chapman brothers freak dolls
with provocative mouths.
"*i love you barney*", but
you sound like a republican.
flood-stained, blood-stained,
hair-brained & like damaged
stock with legs, we the retained
scoffing hula hoops & cheap
white wine; & this is a shop
not a factory – not a means
of production but consumption
& seduction. beware the comfort
of the maddening crowd, the truth
is always standing somewhere by itself.

Paul Summers was born in Blyth, Northumberland, in 1967. His poems have appeared in print since the late Eighties and he has performed all over the world. He was founding co-editor of the 'leftfield' magazines *Billy Liar* and *Liar Republic* and a co-director of Liar Inc Ltd. He has also written for TV, film, radio and theatre and has collaborated many times with artists and musicians on mixed-media projects.

Publications include: *Three Men on the Metro* (Five Leaves 2009), *Big Bella's Dirty Cafe* (Dogeater 2006) & *Cunawabi* (Cunawabi Publishing, London 2003).





The Dark Heart of Berwick—Samantha Cary

Berwick Borough gaol was closed in 1849 and the prisoners moved to new accommodation. The old gaol was preserved as a museum, the five whitewashed cells with tar black doors, and solid wooden beds bearing the imprint of 400 years of bodies are left just as they were. A cinematic, almost completely black and white environment, the cells are also one of the venues for the Berwick Film and Media Arts festival. Visiting the prison cells during the first Festival in the late summer of 2005, the sun streaming through the windows onto the white walls and ancient wooden floorboards, screens flickering in each of the cells, the noise from various monitors hazily mingling, the place seemed to me to be flooded with a sense of lazy wellbeing entirely at odds with its turbulent past.

The Town Hall is owned by the Freemen of Berwick and houses the Guild Hall, Council Chambers where the Borough Council and Freemen meet, the Mayor's robes, and on the second floor, the gaol. The present building was built in 1750 influenced by the same ideas that had also influenced, 25 years earlier, the design of The Church of St Martin in the Fields.

This newly designed classically influenced building that has become Berwick's most distinguishing landmark (vaguely reminiscent of The Church of St Martin in the Fields) stands on land first bequeathed to the guild in the 13th century during the reign of Alexander III, when Berwick-upon-Tweed was Scotland's most important town boasting a prosperous trade in wool exports. The site was marked by a mercat cross, a symbol of the King's peace marking the place where transactions were agreed and protecting the trade of the Burgh. From the early 1500s the site has been used by the Freemen of Berwick, under ordinance of Sir Nicholas Strellie Captain of Berwick, as their council house and prison.

The gaol bore witness to both the Reformation and the Jacobite Rebellions. A list of prisoners in 1715 is predominantly made up of those found guilty of being either papists or involved in the rebellions, or both.

A report of May 1824 by The Committee of The Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and the reformation of Juvenile Offenders found the prison to be severely wanting. Conditions were poor and security inadequate with no resident keeper. There was no outside space and no occupation for felons. Debtors had an outside walkway but were otherwise confined with felons. Serious offenders were often shackled to the walls of the cells with irons, as security was weak in the dayroom. Male, female, young and old mingled in one dayroom, and the report found it to be of particular concern that there was no discrimination between offenders:

"Here are promiscuously associated the convicted housebreaker and the lad committed for trial, or only charged with an assault or misdemeanour; the servant maid, committed on suspicion of some petty theft, the disorderly and refractory apprentice, with the notorious pickpocket and the hardened prostitute"

On Friday 23rd of April 2010 with a similar lack of discrimination, 25 people from creative backgrounds were invited into this historic space on a first come first serve basis for a Factory Nights event. As peanuts were nibbled and spilled out of cupped hands and wine and pop consumed out of white plastic cups introductions were made and conversations hesitantly struck up. The local theatre director was seen to take the magistrates seat in the replica court, a prime vantage point from which to study his fellow creatives. A curator with a passing resemblance to an El Greco painting, discovered a flatmate of an ex flatmate from Belfast. A fly on the wall might have heard an experimental filmmaker, a painter and a percussionist discussing the Scottish witch-hunt. A photographer with a camera for a face darted silently from cell to cell collecting images. Small groups were taken in relay on an ascent from perpendicular ladder to perpendicular ladder up behind the ubiquitous clock face, past the bells balanced upside down, out onto the small balcony around the spire to survey the turbulent late April weather beating the Northumberland town and coastline. A tall Irish painter returned flushed and jubilant after this hairy climb. A slight photographer from Sunderland waited nervously at the top of one ladder reluctant to either ascend or descend. A poet attempted to brand himself with a branding iron and a dried up inkpad. An artist who made drawings and the musician from Newcastle tried out the sloping drunks' bed, so angled to aid the flow of bodily excrements. The scientist and photographer who would soon be performing a public dissection of an octopus stooped to trace the engraved lines of the rigging of a boat carved into the wall by an 18th century inmate. A socially engaged performance artist was heard to observe that this really was the Dark Heart of Berwick.

From Mercat Cross to Town Hall, this site has been at the centre of Berwick's affairs. What better place to climb up and take a view of not only the coastline and turbulent weather but of our changing society and turbulent times.

Samantha Cary is a recent graduate from Sunderland University; she is a painter and freelance writer living in Berwick upon Tweed.



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E. Optional—David Goard

"So what's your interest in the Staiths?"

"I'm interested in the industrial archaeology."

"Do you mean architecture?"

"Yes. Sorry. I get my words mixed up."

"That's OK. I understand..."

And then. We are off – on the last *Factory Night* of the current programme. In this case though, it's more of a factory afternoon – and a sunny one to boot.

Hats from the van and boots from the boot.
I'm a size 10.

The concept of *Factory Nights* arose when *rednile* members were discussing their own struggle for balance – between project management and personal creativity. The consensus was that they and, by default, other artists had a simple something in common. They wanted to explore interesting places SO – *Factory Nights* was born.

And now. Here we are... walking over pallets, through stinging nettles and brambles.

Arrival. Pause... and an introduction from a conservation person... some background info followed by some sensible but highly palatable instructions –

"There is no access to the lower level of the Staiths but you are free to do whatever you guys are here to do."

You can't say fairer than that can you? Hang on though. What are (is?) the Staiths? Or is it Staithes? I am told that the 'e' is optional but I'm not so sure. Anyway –

The Staiths is a large multi-level timber structure that emerges out of the south bank of the Tyne protruding, marginally, into the river. It looks a bit like a curved pier – but a regular punctuation of cogs and girders signal that it wasn't designed for leisure activities. It was constructed in the late nineteenth century as a loading platform for bulk materials, usually coal, shovelled and shifted from train to vessel.

As industry declined, so did the structure, slowly becoming what is now a rather distressed and inaccessible leftover from another age. A hidden gem for sure but strangely enough, this is quite a visible hidden gem – it's just that you can't get to it! Birds can though – waders mainly. They like the mud flats. Otters do too.

And now. We stand on the North Staiths and a little more info comes our way. Amongst the information there are hints of aspiration –

"I would love to see this lit in winter."

But – the birds would be disturbed. Ah yes – wild life and the need for balance (that word again).

The wind blows. People separate and move off to take their own post-industrial promenade, high above the river and mud, exploring in any way that they wish. Some people sketch and some people take photographs. I do this but I also have a number of conversations – quite brief and not with everybody. I am interested in why people are here and I am especially interested in what people 'do'.

There is a man that draws fantasy/scientific insects.

There's a writer for film that wants to be "more of an artist".

There's another writer seeking raw material. "Writing is writing," she says.

There's a wind-proofed musician who has just made an album.

There is an amateur photographer but her camera is much better than mine.

There are many more. Time passes quickly.

There are good hours and bad hours (those you would wish away) but this was a good hour... or two.

Sometimes good hours simply happen but these particular hours were designed and devised and I do not underestimate the logistics of the situation. The picking-up, the dropping off, the hats, the boots and the chats – with the Council Officers of Gateshead and the managers of Taylor Wimpey. These successful negotiations are the mechanics that enable the day, but beneath this there is something else that drives the day.

I've heard it said. Creative people are an odd lot (ha) but, as artists themselves, *rednile* know what other artists want – what they need and what they like. They understand that though 'creatives' might enjoy working to a brief they are equally capable of formulating their own working structures. What I am trying to say is – they don't need to be told what to do. In fact they tend to delight in finding their own way and, from there, identifying concerns and developing concepts. *Factory Nights* offers this opportunity to anybody who cares to respond. In this sense it is fundamentally democratic and uncompromising. Kinda rare actually. Oops.

I am drifting into pontification.

It's time to leave the boardwalk.

And then again. It's a short drive back to the Staiths Show House for toilet, nibbles and a whetting of whistles. As we are encouraged to enter I hear a familiar voice –

"It's sunny outside."

"Do you mean sunny?"

"What? Yes. Oh I see. It's a word check."

Touché. This could be the place to end, where I began – with childish insolence?

It was a sunny day and a good time was had by all.

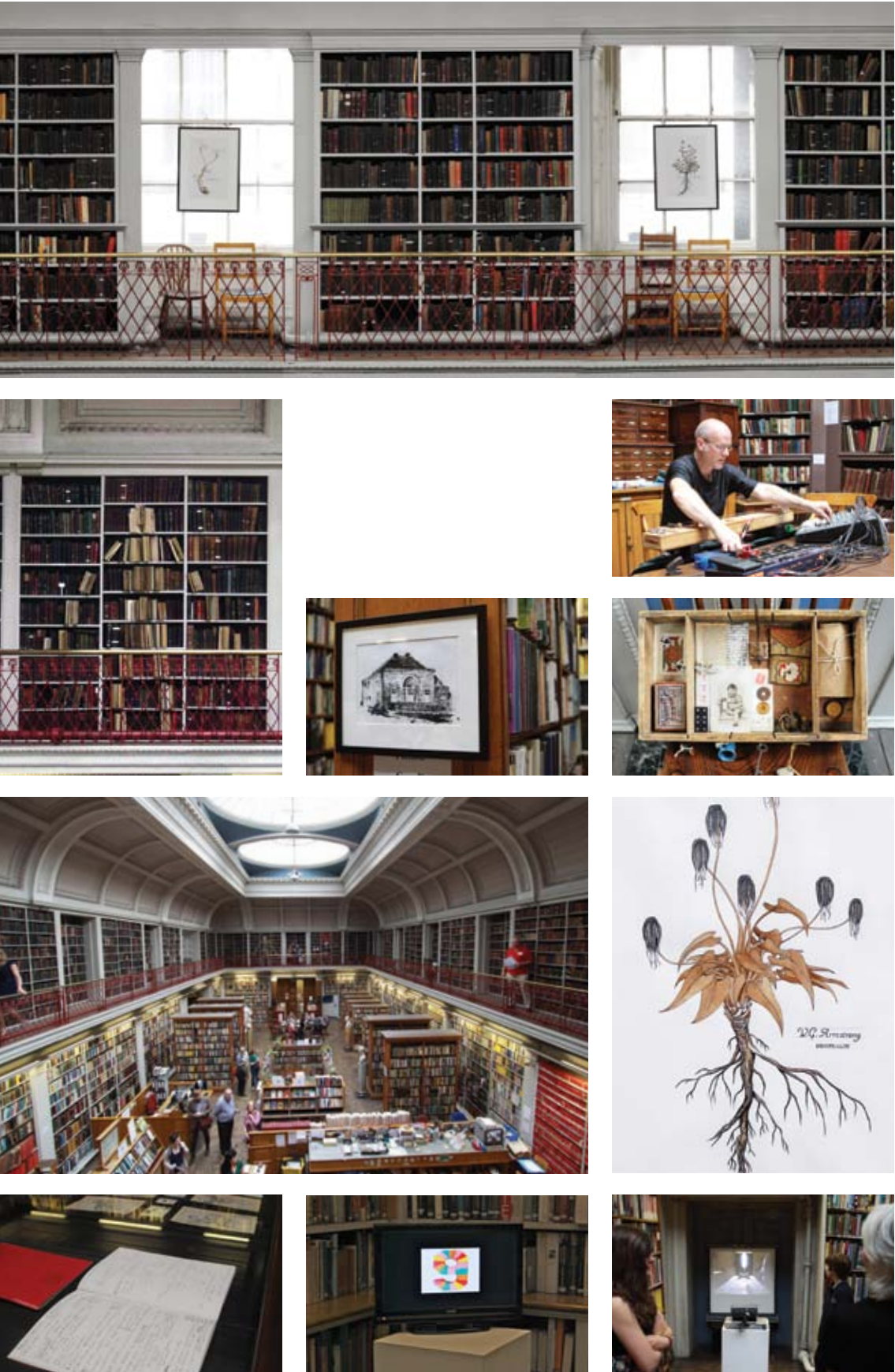
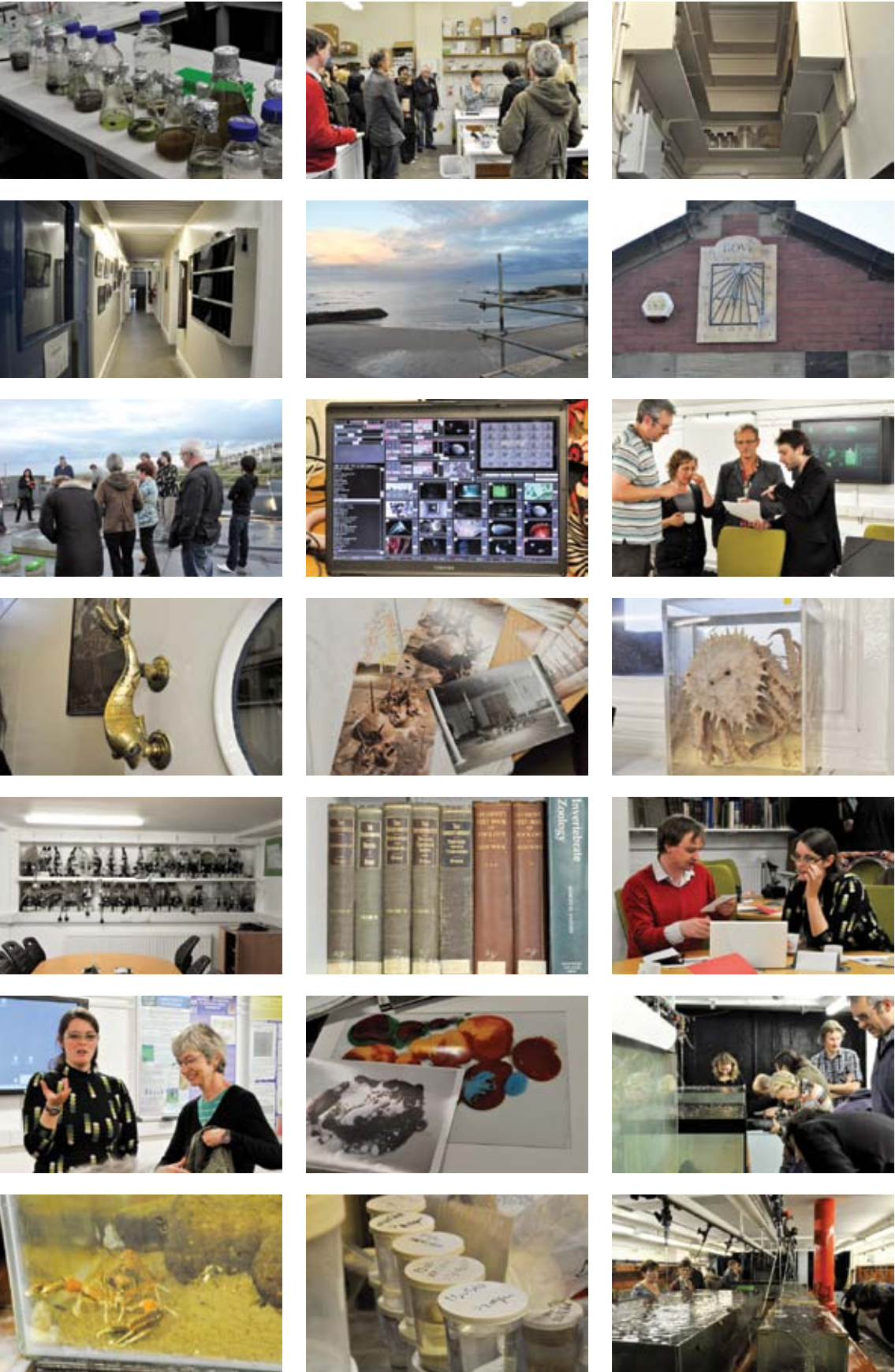


David Goard trained as a painter but over the years his career has diversified. As well as painting his work has included digital photography, installation, lightworks, soundworks, site-specific artworks, multi-media performances and consultancy. This has included the design of posters and billboards; a series of projected images along a seafront; the design of two subways; a Zulu jumping out of cupboard and lots of other things.

Collaboration has been a major feature of his career, initially through residencies and has included collaborations with structural engineers, architects, landscape architects, glass artists, musicians, singers, poets and actors.

David currently runs the Foundation Course at Gateshead College and is the lead artist for Gateshead Council.







One Small Step

One Small Step is a collaboration between Choreographer Dora Frankel and artist Sam Goodlet around the Apollo Pavilion which will involve the community for a whole year in dance, visual art and music experiences. It will culminate in a performance using movement, dance, sound, ropes and abseils celebrating the Apollo Pavilion.

This collaboration is under development and is due to begin in winter 2010.

The Old Man of Joplings

The patchwork world before me –
a hustle of hats and elbows
darting from wish to want.

Not distracted by the pick and mix
she hugs me to her, says I feel like Christmas.
Little girls stare open mouthed.

“Hennessey's Heel Bar
won't quench your thirst young man,
but if it's soles you want...”

On the revolving stairway
the only way is up and I cling
to the hope of escape.

The itch-click of our coins
in her hand. A whole year of saving
for one day like this.



New Collaboration: Dora Frankel & Sam Goodlet, One Small Step, outdoor performance inspired by Factory Night @ Pavilion / Due for completion in 2011



New Collaboration: Louise Bell and rednile artists, The Old Man of Joplings Bag for Life inspired by Factory Nights @ Joplings Department Store / June 2010



rednile artists wanted to mark the closure of the Sunderland Joplings Department Store and its unique and rich 206 year history. Collaborating with writer Louise Bell, who attended the Joplings Factory Night, they created a 'bag for life' as a legacy to the store that closed on Saturday 19th June 2010. 200 limited edition canvas bags with 2 unique designs were created and given out to staff and customers on the final day of trading, to celebrate the much loved store. Louise's poem *The Old Man of Joplings* was inspired by a personal story relating to Joplings and its rich and turbulent history.

Louise Bell is a writer and singer from South Shields and has performed her work at various events in the North East including "The Blue Room", "Love Poetry, Hate Racism" and "Ten by Ten" and recently gained a Masters Degree in Creative Writing from Newcastle University.



Nine Hundred And Sixty Five Cubic Feet

Swedish Artist Helen Edling and Newcastle University Graduate Sarah Tulloch's new collaborative project centers around the Berwick Old Town Hall and Prison Cells and was showcased as part of the Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival in September 2010. They used the 16th century wall drawings made by previous inmates as a starting point for their own intervention in one of the cells. The artists created animations using a combination of drawing, collage and objects associated with the gaol and its' ex-inhabitants. The animations showed the space 'performing', creating a constant push and pull between the real and the imaginary, presence and absence.



Our Future Presentation

The film *Our Future Presentation* is part animation and part dance film. Our Future Presentation inspired by the Factory Night at the Wallaw Old Cinema Blyth, will incorporate original photographs and footage shot at the Wallaw as well as period textile patterns reprinted onto film and fragments of footage left behind in the projection booths. Mat is interested in the tragic irony that this disused building, in its architecture and in its use, represents optimism. Mat will explore how Art Deco is a commercial design style which came out of a period of radical social change and from many interesting cultural developments cut brutally short by WWII. The film will celebrate cinema of that era and the progressive future it represented with site specific dance pieces. It will also be inevitably mourn the wasted potential.





Research & New Connections 'I can make fire.'

"What are we doing here?" A Thai man asked me when we were walking together to the isolated Old Police Station of Doisaket town. His hand was holding an empty sketch book given by an English woman whom he finds it difficult to pronounce her name.

"We are here to find some inspirations and ideas to create Art" I answered gently with glittery eyes behind my glasses. "Perhaps we will get something from there." I pointed at the old Thai style wooden building – a kind of classic suburb governmental building that rarely exists nowadays.

There were some interesting mixture of Thai and international people there, both artists and people who curious to know what was going on. We walked up to the building. There was no one there. The empty table stood right in the middle of shiny wooden floor. Right on the left, there was a tiny jail with a dusty pair of sandals and a paper box inside. It seemed like there was someone there, but we couldn't see his shadow.

"Must be easy for the prisoner to escape of this jail. You just crack down the wooden floor and go out from the bottom." The Thai man commented. "Could be a good scene in an independent film." He continued.

The 1st Factory Night in Thailand was organized in a small town of Doisaket, where there is only one traffic light, which sometimes works in the evening rush hours. Art that the local people perceive here is the famous temple's psychedelic mural painting done by some ex-art students from Chiang Mai University – the only place where you can get a master degree in Fine Arts in Northern Thailand.

The sun was going down slowly and the crowd started to move together on scooters and pick-up trucks passed the market toward the lake. We turned into the big silver warehouse on the corner. It was the newest ice factory that feeds little happiness to people of Doisaket during the hot and humid days.

"I can't speak English." The teenage boy who is the son of the owner told me. "No worries, we are just trying to get some ideas from here" I put my arm around his shoulder. "Ideas for what?" He continued. "Art" I smiled.

The huge condensers silently looked down to us like the robots from Star War movie. "It's minus twenty degree in there." The boy started to walk to a room which covered with thick plastic curtain. "We keep the ice in here before transporting them out".

"Imagine falling down there." An American girl looked into the holes that full of freezing water. "Well, you could create an amazing sculpture." Another German girl put her finger into the icy surface.

The sun disappeared from the edge of the hill, still left the orange beam in the sky. The crowd started walked out to their vehicles. "For the party tonight." The boy handed out a few buckets of fresh ice from his factory.

We drove along the lake, watched the last light of the day reflecting the water. The road brought us passed a jungle to a property that filled with plants and some mud shelters. The sky turned to dark purple and some spots were shined with yellow light bulbs.

We all arrived at a creative residential project that runs the alternative artist-in-residence program – the only one in Thailand.

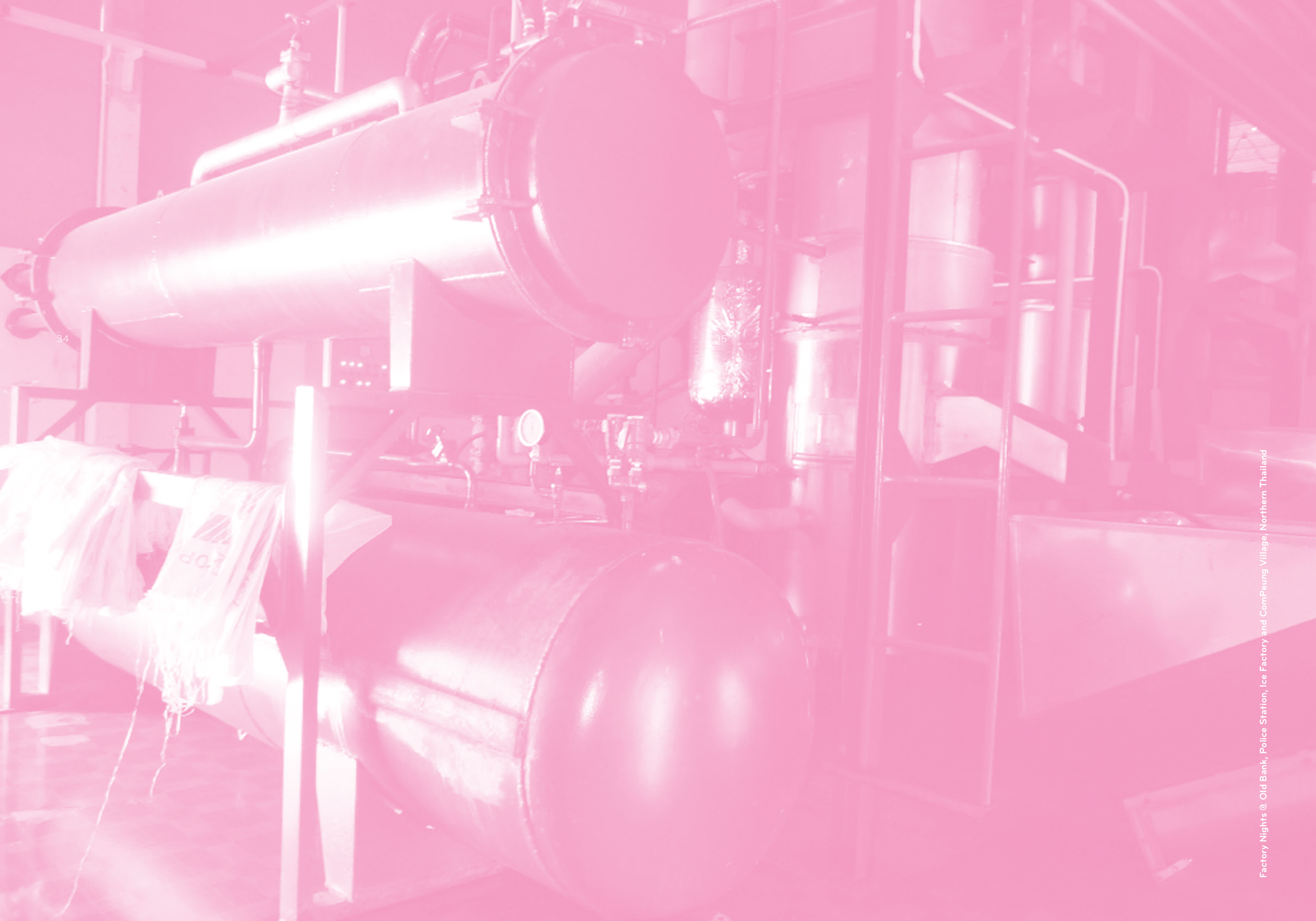
"There will be a performance by a Canadian artist over there inside the round house. Please check it out slowly one by one. You will also see some of the paintings by a Swedish artist inside the same house. The British artist here can talk about her installations she had created during the past month. I will shortly show you around the space and explain the works done by some artists here. We can also talk while having some BQQ and drinks." One of the project team announced.

"I can make fire." Someone requested.

The fire was burning throughout the night. The stars were so bright and sparkling. Ideas and thoughts started to become more visible.

Pisithpong (Ong) Siraphisut
Director ComPeung International Residency
Programme and Factory Night Collaborator,
Chiang Mai, Thailand
June 2010





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Reflection

Carefully encouraged accidents

It's not where you're from it's where you're at. That's true, but still I went looking for the source of the (red) Nile. And found, again, that where you get to and what you get up to can depend on where you come from – but not in the way you might think I mean. This is not a tale of how only well-off people can afford to make art these days – it's a case of artists brought up in a still live tradition of making things and making livings, insisting that art can be a proper job, people should get paid, things should be done properly, with standards, organisation and quality – without compromising freedom and creativity. It's a tale of how accents closer to Cheryl Cole than Cork Street are chipping away at the edifice of both gallery culture and sloppy bohemianism.

One of the rednile artist-founders is adept at painting walls with two rollers at once, because her dad was a painter and decorator and the house was always being decorated when she was growing up. Another gets inspiration from his dad's allotment, something taken for granted until recently – 'building something impenetrable out of doors is really interesting'. Its resourcefulness also echoes through the way rednile make art from what's available in the reinvented spaces of the north east they all grew up and were educated in. (They'd hesitate to use the word post-industrial, it's just how it is.) They're too young, too smart, to be class warriors, and they may not know how unusual they are. They stress the organic nature of rednile and its programme: they won't be boxed in even by their own interests. For them this is an exploration, not a way to get talent-spotted.

Factory Nights is only in part an ironic reference to the fact that, as they say, there are lots of empty spaces in the North East, or to producing art. Factory Nights might be very different elsewhere, although the link to business as a community activity, people making and selling things to their neighbours, has spread to places as disparate and Thailand and Sheffield. These artists refuse to be unbusiness-like, to claim special dispensation from common-sense in their processes or approach because they are 'artists', and business people respond to them as they would any other business: with conversation, challenge and collaboration. Equally they refuse to compromise on the necessarily open processes of bringing artists together in specific sites and seeing what happens, without prescribing results. Although they talk about this in a manner of fact 'what-else-would-you-do?' manner, this combination is uncommon enough to be inspiring.

The organisers within rednile are artists, and Factory Nights are about making art, in all its manifold mystery. This is partly about the history and the places: 'Places and the history of them, they're almost an artform in themselves, the way that people worked and the skills they had, that's really intriguing. We're very hands on and very tactile.' It is also about the carefully designed and facilitated process, which creates resonant but free space for artists to explore in whatever way they choose, from sketching to

filming to writing to the deeper activity of exchanging gossip, information and ideas.

For rednile, Factory Nights are 'a way of stepping outside received reality' whilst also taking a moment to live in the moment. That I was thinking of D.W. Winnicott's 'third space' of play (where real growth happens) when someone described the ethos of Factory Nights as 'Let's play again – everything at work is just play' is one of many things which is neither design nor coincidence, but arguably carefully encouraged accident.

Two films are important to the co-directors in thinking about Factory Nights, one more obvious than the other. *Factory Girl*, about Andy Warhol's 'scene' was an inspiration and fed into the name – but because it made the trio imagine an event that would be like an opening in bringing artists together but where they wouldn't have to pretend they were there for the show: 'the etiquette of the opening is often a hindrance to what people want from it'. Steeped in art and artist networks as they all are, the three artist-founders have no great desire to have a rednile gallery, preferring the textured scruffiness and scruffy tactility of art in other places, more open to a wider public.

The other film is *Dog Town and Z Boys*, with artists reconceived as explorers of the landscape, and the projects arising from Factory Nights as an analogy of the way skateboarders appropriate landscapes without seeking to own them: 'You can play, explore, touch, feel, reinterpret surroundings. Then you move on, have no attachment to that, it's just a time, just a place.' The real work is down to the artist. Anyone coming to a Factory Night expecting to use a set of workshop exercises or rules to trick themselves into making art will be disappointed – it's harder than that. You have to escape and explore your own self and reactions to that place, that history: 'You don't go into a Factory Night wanting to create meaning, you go in and you play and the play generates meaning, rather than going in ready-loaded.'

Talking to the artist-founders, it emerges a Factory Night is not many things: not a workshop, not a seminar, not an awkward networking or speed-dating exercise. Creating the experience is more like the definition of making a sculpture which suggests you take away all the material that *isn't* the sculpture: it's a very practical kind of negative space that makes things possible, taking us back to both Winnicott and allotments.

In exploring the often hidden historical sites which Capital ignores (and yes, I mean both money and London) there is a subtly psychogeographic aspect to rednile and their Factory Nights, an interest in rethinking attitudes to not just 'back streets and alley ways people wouldn't normally go to' but the business units shops and bingo halls seen as worlds apart from the gallery network imagined by some as 'the visual arts'. Even the name has roots in place and paint – the first events took place in Nile Street in

Sunderland and the carpet warehouse used for the first event had a big red door. Originally intended just for that first event, the name stuck as people asked for the next 'rednile'. The transformation of everyday life, rednile's practice suggests, begins with transforming attitudes to both art and work (let alone artworks) by intensifying the attention we pay to the world. The white box is not anathema, but it is slightly foreign to the rednile artist-founders, who are more interested in encouraging the creative process than commissioning objects to sell, to be hidden away in spaces 'you need to ring the bell to get in'. They want to work in public and are increasingly drawn to what might reductively be termed public art as a way of creating lasting works.

It's worth repeating that this team – full of trust in each other, passing ideas, tasks and sentences around with ease – are also artists, and this is integral to what Factory Nights have achieved and what might happen in the future. Their interest is not in what this work can help them do in terms of their careers – they have rejected several overtures to move into managing artist spaces for 'fear of becoming landlords', and keep project management in its rightful box – but in 'what happens if you stick to this model, where can it go, what can it end up being... it's a bit of uncharted territory – where is this going and what can be done with it.' rednile and the Factory Night series continue to fascinate them, to introduce them to new collaborators, to energise their own art practices: 'we feed off other people that we bring in. It's all about learning new skills.'

They end by saying they want to continue to reframe and realign the values of business and art by bringing artists' creative processes into what they call 'hidden spaces', justifying their art not on the grounds of its economic benefit, but on its own merits, seen by those artists think of as 'Business' as 'just another business' which makes things for people to use in their everyday lives. That they do this while creating what you might call a market of ideas and connection not objects may well be the most radical thing about rednile.

(All quotations taken from a conversation with Suzanne Hutton, Michael Branthwaite and Janine Goldsworthy on 25 June 2010.)

Mark Robinson
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Factory Nights

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