

# About ScatterProjects07 - If Elsewhere

Scatter is a new initiative exploring collaborative curatorial practice. It aims to create a space for critical debate, to encourage experimentation within a curatorial approach and to explore new methods of working through live projects.

ScatterProjects07 was a 6-month collaborative project consisting of a 9 person curatorial working group. This involved 6 final year BA Multimedia students, Jen Southern, Artist and Senior Lecturer at the University of Huddersfield and Clare Danek, Programme and Marketing Manager at The Media Centre, Huddersfield.

## Why?

This project was initiated to explore contemporary curatorial practice with a group of undergraduate students in a supported environment. Scatter is interested in today's cultural landscape of collaborative ownership, open source, and shared perspectives, and has used these approaches as methods; developing through discussion a critical arena and a representative exhibition.

The aim was to co-curate a gallery-based exhibition supporting the work of 6/7 media-orientated artists. The project had no prior objectives regarding the context of work, or fixed ideas on how to represent types of media within the given exhibition space. It was important that the approach remained open and the group considered their curatorial role to be hybrid: from interpreter to negotiator, facilitator to producer.

## How?

'What, I want to ask, would it mean to think of art practice as the search for collaborators rather than as the search for an audience?'

Mark Hutchinson

The group advertised for creatives to submit a nominated artwork they would like to see shown in an exhibition context. This call for nominations was placed across several North-East based mailing lists, and on the University of Huddersfield's design and research mailing lists. The project received over 30 submissions, containing a broad spectrum of work in a diverse range of media.

## Process

The process of selecting work took place in a series of two-hour sessions, spread over six weeks. It was intended that the submissions should imply starting points for the thematic direction of the project, and no preconceived ideas were brought to the table.

Some of the initial questions asked at this stage were:

- What parameters does the venue dictate in terms of selecting suitable works?
- How important is the process of open discussion to curation?
- In what ways can the location, architecture and creative objectives of the venue itself contribute to the selection process?
- Is there a responsibility for the curator to frame and interpret the artworks, ensuring the exhibition is accessible to all who visit it?

The preliminary sessions had focussed on curation in general. The group had discussed different methods and approaches, considering curation in a variety of different contexts. The group was interested to see what emerged from their unique approach; how would the artworks nominated reveal a curatorial premise?

The group laid out all the nominations on slips of paper, and began separating them out into categories. At first the categories were simple, defined by the production method of the work; website, advert, installation, interactive media work, product, game, animation and photography.

## Outcomes

Over the sessions the categories of separation became more definitive, driven by the groups discussion and perspectives at that given point. It was emphasised that exploration took precedence over determination, removing the tendency to grasp at works of personal interest and hold on to them as choices instead of allowing a natural selection to emerge.

The categorisation of situation/location raised lots of questions and interest, and was sub categorised as below:

Ownership of space, challenging space, control of space, distortion of space, moving through space, seizure of space, trespassing, laying claim to space, network space, voiced space, local and global space.

From these final sub categories, the idea of local and global sharing emerged, laying the foundations for If Elsewhere.

Overall, the group defined their own learning experience through continually challenging and questioning decisions and outcomes. Much thematic ground was covered, creating a shared understanding of the project and the selected work, and a solid foundation upon which to base future practices.

Karen Gaskill  
July 2007.