

## **Jerwood Visual Arts Bursaries**

<http://www.jerwoodvisualarts.org/opportunities/artist-bursaries/>

### **Artist Statement**

Timber & Battery's playful work considers meaning and meaninglessness through oblique gestures. The collaborative practice of Rohanne Udall (London, b. 1990) and Paul Hughes (Nottingham, b. 1991), it takes place across choreographic, performance and visual arts contexts. Trained in fine art and philosophy, our practice is a meeting point between disciplines; a persistent and fidgeting enquiry that continually questions itself and the environments it finds itself within.

We are indecisive in the face of the anxieties and demands we face as artists, and strive to skewer and sidestep these problems through formal and gestural simplicity manifesting across many light and fidgety works. We are attracted to a certain weakness (weak positions, weak gestures, weak ideas and weak images), aligning ourselves with a history of critical and conceptual practice while directly borrowing from the figure and physicality of the fool. We are idiots, stumbling into situations which appear to confound us; forcing ourselves to playfully adapt in the hope of generating liberating new possibilities. Each individual work resists being reduced to any fixed and communicative message, with our practice rather foregrounding the complex materiality of the body – fleshy, uncertain, demanding, awkward, restless, lethargic, playful, and deeply political.

Within a climate of austerity and neoliberalism, artistic and performance contexts announce their political utility as sites of assembly, exchange, expression and critique. However, in rejection of a society that calls for productivity, stringency and accountability, we resolutely defend art's potential to remain wasteful and non-instrumentalized – a waste of energy, time, space and possibility. Insisting on the most oblique of gestures, and floating in an interdisciplinary void, we assert the continued significance of strategies of insignificance and meaninglessness. We embrace the contradictions of valuing uselessness and pursuing meaningless; and remain curious, playful, and suspicious.

### **An introduction to you and your practice**

Rohanne and Paul met during their undergraduate studies in Edinburgh - studying Fine Art practice and Philosophy respectively. Initially collaborating within the thriving student performance scene, they made riotous clown shows, interventions into cabaret evenings to incite audience takeover, and publicised and marketed a fake venue at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Our practice works primarily in visual arts and dance scenes. We work with whatever materials are close to hand - performance, sculpture, video, sound, publication - seeking to frustrate the demands of any given context, and open possibilities of practice and thought. Recent credits include Chisenhale Dance Space, Rich Mix, Bethnal Green Working Men's Club (all London), Attenborough Arts Centre (Leicester), DISKURS (Gießen), ICW (Blackpool) and Radiophrenia (Glasgow), with residencies at Summer Lodge (Nottingham) and Hospitalfield Arts (Arbroath).

Strongly identifying our work as research, we feel it imperative to engage with discourse beyond the production of artworks. Over the past couple of years, we have presented our work and spoken at conferences and symposia (University of Roehampton, May 2016; ATW Institut Giessen, February 2016; Society for Artistic Research, The Hague April 2016; and Coventry University, June 2017). Additionally, we have organised residencies ('Plus One', University of Roehampton, July 2017), interdisciplinary crits ('Fragment, (consider revising)', Eastbourne House Arts, August 2017) and publications ('Footnotes', forthcoming) for interdisciplinary exchange.

Having now collaborated for nearly four years, we find ourselves more bold and confident in our thinking. In constantly moving between disciplinary contexts, we notice our work often sitting awkwardly within the curatorial frames available. We have decided to experiment with developing longer-term projects; to organising better institutional support for our work, and to create platforms for interdisciplinary work to thrive. We want to insist on the appropriate support required for our work, and to create sustainable conditions for the continuation of peer-led initiatives.

**What is the developmental opportunity you wish you undertake and when will it take place?**

We wish to develop our one-off performance-broadcast '*Radio Play*' into an informal, independently-organised and playfully idiotic radio station taking place throughout 2018: a platform to host artwork and thinking by peers across disciplinary and geographical distance.

This project first arose in July 2017 at Summer Lodge, a residency at Nottingham Trent University. The pop-up radio/performance was broadcast throughout the building to co-residents, students and the public. We played music, performed a specially-written radio play, and gave a live reading of John Cage's '*Lecture on Nothing*'; our co-resident artists interviewed one another, presented sonic artworks and created DJ sets around their research.

It was really fun, and we were surprised by how direct, rich and liberating a platform radio could be for the presentation and interrogation of artistic thought. We were excited to discover for ourselves what every pirate radio station has known: the particular independence of sound as a medium, its porosity and power, and its capacity to utopically manifest a temporary space within the world.

We wish to run 5 sessions of Radio Play throughout 2018; broadcast directly to the internet, and then existing as a downloadable series. Occurring roughly every two months (April, June, August, October and December) these individual broadcasts, lasting only an evening each, can be undertaken without further institutional support – we can perform and broadcast them from our homes. However, they also have the possibility of being hosted within, and responding to, the contexts we find ourselves in throughout the year – at a residency, for example – and so can be individually responsive to engage with the peers and publics we encounter.

Each broadcast would be presented live hosted by us, and feature materials and provocations sent in by artists beforehand – a sprawling, 3+ hour site of discourse, pleasure and contemplation.

### **What do you hope to achieve, and how will you go about this?**

Primarily, we wish to make five original radio performances, each an evening-long, that are broadcast live on the internet:

- Three months before each broadcast, we will invite 3 artists to contribute materials – these might be existing works they wish to share; new projects they would like to test; scores or provocations for us to undertake; or other ways their practice might experiment with sound and speech. These artists will be a mix of existing relationships who we feel this invitation would support, and those we wish to initiate a dialogue with. We will make use of the intangibility of sound to showcase a diversity of discipline and geographical distance in order to forge new relationships and an exchange of audiences.
- Collected and organised the week before the broadcast, these materials will be broadcast as live online audio streaming. Before and between, we (Rohanne and Paul) will act as hosts: introducing, contextualising, discussing the works, and generally linguistically meandering. In line with the rest of our practice, we are interested in a kind of hazy, lazy conversation that takes place between us – as such, much of the overall broadcast will be improvised.
- This audio will be recorded, and hosted as a free accessible archive on our website; acknowledging and linking to the work of contributors, creating a network of emerging artists working with sound.

With a Scarlet m-Audio USB **audio** interface and two studio microphones, we can prepare and record this material from our homes; and through a Mixlr streaming software licence we can broadcast these materials online. We already have the capacity to later host these files on our website. While we feel confident in our technical skills to undertake this project, we are excited to discover unexpected challenges which might demand us to develop new skills.

### **Why is this important for your personal and/or professional development?**

Through undertaking the technical challenges of hosting, DJing and live streaming, this project would develop our skills in the use of sound. Following the first '*Radio Play*' in July 2017, we were invited to present audio work on the digital art space *isthisit?*, and at the interdisciplinary festival DISKURS17 (ATW, Giessen, Germany). We learned loads; '*Radio Play*' would continue this momentum in provide fresh challenges and making possible projects of increasing complexity.

Working across disciplinary contexts, we find ourselves lacking a single peer group, but rather making numerous friends working across diverse modes. With *Radio Play*, we would be holding space for a diverse group of artists – representing to ourselves, our peers and the public a broad geographical and disciplinary distance. We will develop our understanding of

the connections and differences between the contexts we inhabit; and connect underrepresented artists who would otherwise remain invisible to one another.

Our interdisciplinary can make it difficult to maintain conversations with audiences and institutions with a specific disciplinary remit. The persistence of this project would make it possible to continually invite these professionals and audiences to a space saturated in our interests, artwork and friends. Doing so opens up opportunity both for this project and our wider practice; perhaps attracting further institutional interest and support through invitations to different festivals, platforms and projects.

The latest, and largest, in a growing series of platforms we have organised to support our peers (including conversations, residencies, crits and publications), the iterability of this project would allow us to experiment with and develop this emerging curatorial practice, and evaluate our efforts. *Radio Play* would help us to develop specific models of invitation and support, in order to develop a rigorous ethics and practice of curatorship.

### **How much do you need and what would the money be used for?**

We would like to request £1000.

£75 - Year subscription to Mixlr online audio service, making possible reliable online broadcasts.

£130 - Focusrite Scarlett 2i2 from Gear4Music.com, making possible the live mixing of sound alongside recording into two microphones

£195 - 2 x Shure SM58 Vocal Mic with stand and cable, from Gear4Music.com

£525 - artist expenses (£35 per artist for 15 artists, 3 artist per broadcast).

£85 - contingency

We are already familiar with these specific technical resources; they are easily transportable, meaning we can take the project wherever we find ourselves. The cost of hiring these materials would exceed the cost of buying them, and securing them through this project would open up a huge number of possibilities for our future work.

While the funds would not cover adequate fees to pay each artist, we hope the invitation is ultimately a useful opportunity for them to experiment with their interests and ideas.

However, we want to ensure there are funds available such that each artist could be reimbursed for any expenses incurred, ensuring no one is out of pocket.

**It is not necessary for there to be any other funding, but if there are other finances being used towards the activity please indicate what they are.**

No.

### **What is the timeline for activity?**

January 2018 – Contact first round of artists asking interest.

March 2018 – Confirm funding JVA

April 2018 – First Radio Play broadcast hosted as part of confirmed residency with Dance4, Nottingham (confirmed). Artists for June broadcast invited.

June 2018 – Second broadcast. Artists for August broadcast invited. Begin soliciting interest from institutions to see how the project could develop into the future.

August 2018 – Third broadcast. Artists for October broadcast invited.

October 2018 – Fourth broadcast, hosted as part of residency in Scotland (pending result) in collaboration with sound artist Fionn Duffy. Artists for December broadcast invited. Confirm institutional interest and support for future of the project.

December 2018 – Fifth broadcast. Project evaluation.