

# More Bite in the Real World: Usership in Arts-Based Research Practice by Vagabond Reviews

*...What if the museum made way for usership, actually embedding it in its *modus operandi*? A museum where usership, not spectatorship, is the key form of relationality; where the content and value it engenders are mutualised for the community of users themselves?<sup>1</sup>*

In India, near the town of Munnar in the southwestern state of Kerala, there is a viewing point of the Western Ghats mountain range. As the spectator approaches this viewing point it becomes apparent that a small café has inserted itself between the viewer and the panoramic spectacle of the mountains and the valley below. Undaunted, the spectator continues on to the café terrace and there discovers that the view has been further obscured by the planting of a line of trees. Beyond those trees, a second terrace can be glimpsed. The steps leading down to that second terrace are amicably guarded by a café worker charging ten rupees to anyone who wishes to move beyond the line of trees to enjoy an uninterrupted view of the valley.

The beauty of this doubly constructed barrier is that it contains within the logic of its own internal structure both the fabrication of the problem, in this case *the view obscured by the trees*, and the solution, *the fee* to get beyond the trees. Is this not precisely the structure of the pedagogical logic within which the educational function of the contemporary art museum must operate? That is to say, the museum curatorially constructs the mystery that its educational function must then solve for the audience.

## **Decoding Invitations**

Every so often an invitation comes along to enter into that institutional process of decoding art for audience. In January this year a member of *Vagabond Reviews* received such an invitation. In this instance it was a request to chair a public talk by an architect who had been asked to respond to an exhibition at the Irish Museum of Modern Art entitled *One Foot in the Real World*. The exhibition was itself a curatorial response to other exhibitions at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, in particular *Eileen Gray: Architect, Designer, Painter*. Following the first curatorial process that brought together the Eileen Gray exhibition, a second curatorial process drew on the Eileen Gray show to assemble and display content from the IMMA collection:

*"Drawing on IMMA's Collection, One Foot in the Real World includes works that explore the urban environment, the everyday or the domestic. Prompted by the recent Eileen Gray, Leonora Carrington and Klara Lidén exhibitions; the exhibition One Foot in the Real World addresses the psychology of*

space; scale and the body gravity and transformation. Elements of architecture and design recur as points of departure in the works; such as bricks; the keyhole; the window; the door and the table.”<sup>2</sup>

In that sense the architect’s public talk represented the third move in a hermeneutic sequence: the curatorial interpretation of Eileen Gray, the curatorial interpretation of the IMMA collection in the light of the Eileen Gray exhibition, and the architectural interpretation of those two interpretations. In any case, the public talk was situated at the conclusion of this self-contained semiotic system, the fee, as it were, for an uninterrupted view of the valley.

Looking back over the preparatory notes for chairing the public talk, they read as an attempt to embody the role of an interdisciplinary decoder of that curatorial sequence. In the discussions leading up to the talk, there was a gentle but persistent prompting of the chair to inhabit his long since past background as a psychologist. It was as though the interdisciplinary interplay being imagined here was a triangulation of psychological knowledge with architectural and curatorial knowledge in a three-pronged enactment of an inter-disciplinary decoding. The preparatory notes bear witness to an attempt to corral this into the production of psychological knowledge. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari are invoked as a first defense against “unifying impulses.” Earlier formulations in the preparatory notes for a mode of address are symptomatic of a resistance to embrace the decoding function:

“A quote from *A Thousand Plateaus* comes to mind, where Deleuze and Guattari say, and I paraphrase here, that unity is always an obscene supplement to the system considered. As ‘the system considered’ here it is therefore important to resist any attempt to unify *One Foot in the Real World* into some kind of synthesis.”<sup>3</sup>

No doubt the exhibition contained within it [a sense of] domestic terror, in *Kitchen Table* (1991) by Dorothy Cross and the *Untitled* (2001) stuffed head by Louise Bourgeois. And certainly there were site-specific responses, such as the installation *Still Falling I* (1991) by Anthony Gormley, which brought together the space of the museum, the body, and the self into a unity of some kind. However, even the acknowledgement of those possible links was already a breaking with that self-imposed prohibition on unification, an attempt to connect it all. Instead, in a not entirely unfamiliar move, the curatorial framework is sacrificed on the altar of the authentic subjective experience of the spectator:

“Of course there is a curatorial lens that strictly speaking unifies according to certain principles. For example, the curatorial decisions here have responded to the idea of the keyhole, door and the window. But that’s a kind of expert coding that produces its own form of exhaustion. So as not to be bound by it we bring our own pleasures, prejudices and aversions to bear, making our encounter with the work a highly subjective journey.”<sup>4</sup>

In the event, few of these preoccupations were aired at the architect’s talk. But it serves nonetheless as an illustration of a certain recognisable pedagogical operation, something in the order of a decoding of the already enacted curatorial sequence of selection, presentation and encounter.

In our own practice in the field of socially engaged art, we have also found ourselves on the site of the gallery-museum where we have enacted a different mode of pedagogical operations and procedures. It is one in which the content-display-spectator sequence has been deliberately dissolved along the lines of a different mode of knowledge production. In terms of a conceptual armature to describe those pedagogical processes, we turn to recent work by the Paris-based art writer and theorist Stephen Wright and his insertion of usership into the conceptual lexicon for new processes of production within the field of cultural life.

### The Rise of the User

“Usership represents a radical challenge to at least three stalwart conceptual institutions in contemporary culture: spectatorship, expert culture and ownership.”<sup>5</sup>

In his recent book *Toward a Lexicon of Usership*, commissioned by the Van Abbemuseum<sup>6</sup>, Wright set himself the task of retooling the conceptual lexicon that dominates our contemporary institutional repertoire. He suggests that this task “requires both retiring seemingly self-evident terms, while at the same time introducing a set of emergent concepts.”<sup>7</sup> Among those terms that should be retired are *expert culture*, *ownership* and the *disinterested spectator* while *loopholes*, *deactivate (art’s aesthetic function)* and *museum 3.0* are among the “emergent concepts.” For Wright, these emergent concepts underpin a new form of both artistic and political subjectivity – that of “usership.” While the practice of usership per se is not new, Wright makes the point that with the rise of networked cultures, “Users have come to play a key role as producers of information, meaning and value, breaking down the long-standing opposition between consumption and production.”<sup>8</sup> Within the field of culture, there has also been a shift:

“Turning away from pursuing art’s aesthetic function, many practitioners are redefining their engagement with art, less in terms of authorship than as users of artistic competence, insisting that art foster more robust use values and gain more bite in the real world.”<sup>9</sup>

Specifically, he opposes the traditional curatorial arc of content selection, display, and spectatorship with the culturally ascendant concept of usership, which presents a particular challenge for the contemporary art museum:

“Museums these days find themselves in the throes of a crisis of self-understanding, hesitating between irreconcilable museological paradigms and userships. On the one hand, their physical architecture of display is very much top down: curatorship determines content which is oriented towards spectatorship. On the other hand, while concerned about protecting their ‘vertical dignity,’ to the degree that they have tried to keep pace with the usological turn in the field of culture, museums have embraced elements of 2.0 culture.”<sup>10</sup>

In usership, we generate content. We make a playlist, we accumulate contacts, we construct image banks, we “like.” In the field of culture, we are the content generators until we encounter the space of the museum where we collapse into spectatorship.<sup>11</sup>

In this essay we use a case study from our own practice to explore how the notion of usership creates a different kind of curatorial line: from user-generated content to display as “content validation and refinement.” Our own effort, if you will, to get more bite in the real world. But in order to properly describe and understand the case study we present here, namely the Arcade Project, we must first give an account of the project which preceded it.

### **Cultural Archaeology**

“How can images and objects be brought together in a manner that helps etch a lingering doubt onto the heart of amnesia? How can concepts and experiences that sustain an attitude of vigilance against the impulse of erasure be expressed as tools to think and feel with, to work with in the present?”<sup>12</sup>

The project *Cultural Archaeology* was our first opportunity to elaborate a significant community-based mode of inquiry that harnessed the potential of the studio and the gallery as sites for the collective generation of narratives of place. And of course, it was through that process of collective learning that the relations of trust and collaborative styles were established for the case study, which we will subsequently describe.

Based in Rialto in Dublin’s southwest inner city, Fatima Groups United (FGU) is a community development organisation comprised of elected representatives for a number of community-based initiatives in the area. The organisation was established in the late 1980s in response to the deteriorating economic and social conditions of residents living in the public housing flat complex known then as Fatima Mansions. From the mid-1990s onwards, FGU was in protracted and intense negotiations with the city council, planners, architects, and private developers for an equitable regeneration of their area. Against the odds, they succeeded in their arguments for better living and working conditions for residents.<sup>13</sup> Fatima Mansions became the only public housing complex in the inner city to have their promised regeneration realised.<sup>14</sup> Working closely with the Rialto Youth Project, one of the longest established youth projects in the city, FGU harnessed arts and cultural practices very effectively during this period as a means to articulate and make visible the communities’ perspective.

In 2008, Vagabond Reviews and Fatima Groups United began working together to formulate a collaborative, arts-based research initiative focused on securing and representing that rich history of arts and cultural practice in Rialto. As well as investing in significant arts education programmes for young people, Fatima Groups United and the Rialto Youth Project spearheaded a number of significant arts-based events marking key moments of transition in the urban regeneration process. Specialising in large-scale street theatre events, they engaged hundreds of local residents over a decade-long process of infrastructural and social regeneration.

Over the course of 2008, the commitment to re-present the story of how arts-based processes combined with the struggle for agency in the urban regeneration process crystallized into a community-based inquiry entitled *Cultural Archaeology*. The project set out to capture that history while maintaining a strategic focus on future provisions for arts-based pedagogy for young people and adults in Rialto. The *Cultural Archaeology* was organised into two strands of inquiry. The first took

the form of a studio-based archival process in a community centre in the heart of community development culture in Rialto.

### **Cultural Archaeology at Studio 468**

Studio 468 is a dedicated studio space housed in the St. Andrew's Community Resource Centre in Rialto<sup>15</sup>. The Studio 468 residency programme is structured to encourage artists to combine the experience of an autonomous studio residency with the experience of direct engagement with the Rialto community.<sup>16</sup> Vagabond Reviews and Fatima Groups United secured a six-month residency at the studio where the *Cultural Archaeology* process was initiated. Taking the form of community-based ethnography towards capturing the history of artistic and cultural practices in Fatima / Rialto from 1949 to 2010, Studio 468 became an open site of (re)collection, a space for inviting in, gathering, reviewing, and representing narrative seams on a community history with community and youth leaders, representative residents groups, artists, and community activists. As more storytellers passed through the studio, the recollections spanned through the decades but focused most intensively on more recent times when arts and cultural practice were brought into play by the community and its leadership in the struggle to secure meaningful agency within the urban regeneration process.



*Cultural Archaeology* 2009. Photograph courtesy of NCAD

As the residency progressed, those accumulated narratives were organised thematically into a timeline, which went back to the first tenants in Fatima Mansions in the 1950s to contemporary narratives of regeneration up to 2010. The timeline was organised into four strands: *Creative Coalitions* related to arts and cultural practice in Rialto; *Famous Stories* related to interwoven anecdotes of community life; *Dispatches* related to the media trail; and *Transmissions* related to the significant body of photographic and film material held by Fatima Groups United.

### **Cultural Archaeology at the National College of Art and Design Gallery**

In the second month of the Studio 468 residency, Fatima Groups United was invited to exhibit *Cultural Archaeology* as a work in progress at the recently established public gallery at the National College of Art and Design. In partnership with

Fatima Groups United, Vagabond Reviews presented first findings from the Studio 468 residency at the NCAD Gallery, but more importantly, the possibility of user interface with the content was built into the architecture of the gallery-based programme. The construction of a modular, event-based timeline in the gallery allowed specific groups, and the public more generally, to contest, add, edit, and bring new material, textual or photographic, into a process of content generation and revision.

The opportunity to access the gallery space was an example of the creative tension between the notion of the gallery as a fixed sanctuary of stable content as opposed to content with a user interface. We faced this challenge most forcefully when working through the transition from Studio 468 to the NCAD gallery, where we felt the pressure to present finished work. Instead, we transposed the ethnographic process, which began at Studio 468, into the gallery space and reformulated the exhibition as a residency. The gallery was transformed into a participatory space for the production of local, embodied knowledge of a particular neighbourhood.



*Fatima, A Cultural Archaeology*,  
NCAD Gallery, 2009. Photograph  
courtesy of NCAD

Over the two weeks of the residency, we continued to develop and extend the *Cultural Archaeology* research process, hosting a series of dedicated sessions with community leaders in the gallery space and continuing to build the *Cultural Archaeology* Timeline. We designed a modular structure in the space of the gallery, where text and photographic content could be added and the content already there could be rearranged, contested, and edited, thus breaking the idea of the fixed, “do not touch” element of representation in the space of the gallery.



above: *Fatima, A Cultural Archaeology*, Timeline Wall NCAD Gallery, 2009. Photographs courtesy of NCAD



left: *S Block Fatima Mansions*, Photographic Banner Chris Maguire, photograph courtesy of NCAD

In keeping with the idea of developing a locally-based provision for learning in visual and performing arts in Rialto, we also used the residency as an opportunity to focus on the question of pedagogy and urban regeneration. For this we established a series of structured and informal dialogues between artists, students, architects, youth and community development workers, and activists, writers, and academics as a seminar series based in the gallery space.

On completion of the gallery-based residency, we returned to Studio 468 to continue working on the *Cultural Archaeology*. Once we completed the Studio 468 Residency, the Timeline Wall was installed in the newly built F2 Neighbourhood Centre where for over a year and a half it operated as a discursive platform between key community workers and a range of external stakeholders.

Emboldened by this community-based experiment on user-generated content, we readily accepted the invitation from the Rialto Youth Project to extend our art-based modes of inquiry into their internal organisational space. In 2011, Vagabond Reviews embarked on the Arcade Project with the Rialto Youth Project.

**Arcade Project: A Case Study in Usership**

As we have already asserted, it was precisely the shared experience of that ethnographic process for securing community narratives of place and struggle that

created the conditions of possibility for taking the process further. The Arcade Project built on that collaborative experience of knowledge production and representation to co-elaborate an arts-based inquiry between Vagabond Reviews and the Rialto Youth Project. Now moving towards a publication, the Arcade Project has explored the shared pedagogical foundations underpinning the Rialto Youth Project's approach to arts-based youth work.

### **Project Context**

Based in the southwest inner city, the Rialto Youth Project (RYP) is one of the longest established youth projects in Dublin. Rialto Youth Project works with disadvantaged and at-risk young people in Rialto. Since the 1980s, the Rialto Youth Project has pioneered an arts-based approach to youth work. From early initiatives in community-led drama and film, it currently incorporates weekly arts programming in music, street theatre, visual arts, and dance and provides a foundational arts programme for younger children called ArtSparks. In addition to those weekly, programme-driven arts initiatives, the Rialto Youth Project collaborates with artists on longer term, socially engaged art projects.<sup>17</sup> Those issue-based projects have focussed on a range of themes that have affected young people's lives in Rialto. Such projects have embraced a range of art forms, such as earlier work in the 1980s in the area of drama and film that explored young people's experience of the justice system and unemployment. Large-scale street theatre events addressed issues like the drugs epidemic in the 1990s (*Burning the Demons*), music and visual arts were employed to explore young people's response to urban regeneration (*Tower Songs*, 2005 – 2007), and most recently an arts-based research and performance process explored equality issues for local women (*The Natural History of Hope*, 2012 - ongoing).

### **Project Objectives**

The Arcade Project set out firstly to explore and describe the organisation's core values and principles of practice, and secondly to explore and describe the shared pedagogical foundations underpinning the organisation's approach to arts-based youth work.

We called the first line of inquiry into Rialto Youth Project's core values, Arcade One. Arcade One began as a five-month, arts-based research process that set out to evoke organisational values by drawing on the shared perspectives of the total ecology of practice that makes up the Rialto Youth Project. As such, we engaged with the RYP in its entirety, including its Board of Governance, its management, youth workers, and volunteers. The Arcade One process was based in the Fifth Block Studio, a converted flat situated in Dolphin House, the largest public housing flat complex in inner city Dublin.

### **Art Studio as Notebook**

In our practice we invariably look at the possibilities in each project situation for appropriating and transforming spaces into an accumulative research base. We seek out spaces where visual representation and knowledge production come together with modes of conversational inquiry.<sup>18</sup> Working from the Fifth Block Studio opened up exciting possibilities for introducing a range of bespoke arts-based research strategies and approaches. In our work we like to diagrammatically reveal and make visible the research process. As illustrated via the 2009 *Cultural*

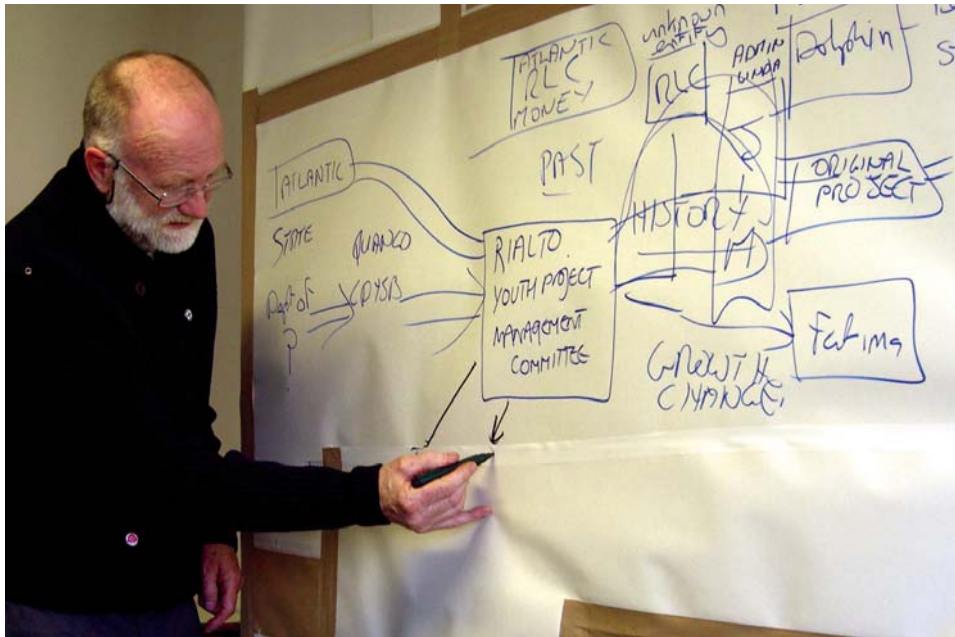


*Archaeology* project, that process involves the creation of layered textual traces, imagery, diary-like narratives, and photographic traces.

For the Arcade One workshop series, the Fifth Block Studio was transformed into a walk-in notebook. All of the available wall surface and table surfaces were covered with paper, thereby transforming the room into a writable space. Our aim was to animate the possibilities of the studio space as a place of exchange, social encounter and dialogue for key constituent groups within the organisation.

As a research base, the Fifth Block Studio changed fluidly. It developed its own visual culture as we moved through the inquiry process. The art production space was transformed into a content generator. The studio was conceived of as a space for hosting quasi-formalised conversations and more structured workshops aimed over the course of the Arcade process towards gathering information and engaging in qualitative analysis with a view to ultimately sharing findings.

A workshop series was conducted at Fifth Block Studio between March and May 2011 with the seven constituent groups that together make up the Rialto Youth Project. Over the course of those workshops, thirty-six participants generated fourteen multi-layered sketches of their organisational territories.



Arcade 1 Organisational Maps, RYP Management Committee fifth block studio, 2011. Photograph by Vagabond Reviews

In the second part of each workshop, participants were asked to consider the core organisational values and principles of practice underpinning their work with the Rialto Youth Project. Using arts-based techniques combined with strategies borrowed from projective testing, participants generated 476 value statements. Also exploiting the space of the studio, *Vagabond Reviews* engaged in a qualitative analysis of those statements as well as rendering the hand-drawn maps generated in the workshops into diagrammatic representations of the social constructions of the structure of the Rialto Youth Project.

### Validation Event May 2011

Working with those 476 value statements, a Values Framework was constructed as a way of organising the emergent themes into a synthesis of Principles of Practice for the Rialto Youth Project. The generation of those Values culminated in a Validation Event at the F2 Neighbourhood Centre in Rialto. The Validation event borrowed the exhibition display function to decode and critique the content. The room was organised as part exhibition and part workshop space. The refined maps of organisational structures and territories were installed along the available wall and window space.



Arcade 1 Validation Event F2  
Neighbourhood Centre, 2011.  
Photograph by Vagabond Reviews

Over the course of a two-and-a-half-hour workshop, the forty or so workers, management, and the board of the RYP were invited to re-visit the text content generated over the workshop series, to revise their original, workshop-based value statements and critically engage with the Values framework in an open forum. Following the validation event, we produced a document entitled *Arcade One: Mapping the Principles of Practice for the Rialto Youth Project*. This document presented an overview of the values inquiry process along with the emergent organisational values framework.

### Arcade Two

Arcade Two went on to explore how the values framework generated in Arcade One could be harnessed to describe the structure and pedagogical features that the Rialto Youth Project has developed in relation to its distinctive, arts-based approach to youth work. In May 2011, we began working with Rialto Youth Project's Arts Team Coordinators towards mapping out and describing their distinct pedagogical approach to arts-based youth work. Using the Values Framework as a foundation, work focused on:

- documenting the histories of practice for each art form in the youth project
- developing the Programme Architecture for each of the five areas of arts programming
- mapping the organisational values for each of the programme areas

Using a collaborative workshop process of content generation, revision, and descriptive refinement, Arcade Two evolved into an organisationally self-generated construction of their arts-based pedagogy.



*Arcade 1 Validation Event F2  
Neighbourhood Centre, 2011.  
Photograph by Chris Maguire*



*Arcade 2 Revision and Refinement, Rialto  
Youth Project room F2, 2013.  
Photograph by Vagabond Reviews*

Most recently, Models of Practice for each of the five arts-based programmes in visual arts, dance, music, street theatre, and early childhood foundation have been produced. Each Model of Practice outlines:

- a definition of the art form
- a description of the pedagogical approach
- the key organisational values underpinning the work in that art form
- an overview of the programme architecture, including components and outcomes

Those arts-based Models of Practice are now being extended as templates for generating descriptions of other areas of youth work within the organisation.

### **More Bite in the Real World**

Drawing on Stephen Wright's analysis of usership in the field of cultural production, the Arcade Project has been described here as an illustration of a curatorial process with usership as the driver of knowledge production. We explored the play between user-generated content and display as a creative refinement process in the production of user-generated knowledge. Specifically, the studio-based phase of the Arcade Project (Arcade One) was considered as an example of transforming the space of art production into a "content generator." The consideration of this phase of the project concluded with an example of an organisation-wide validation event which borrowed the exhibition-display function to decode and critique user content. Finally, the second, and ongoing, phase of the project (Arcade Two) considered how the Values Framework collectively generated in the first phase of the project was used to collaboratively craft a pedagogy for the organisation's arts-based approach to youth work.

We must return then to our point of departure and ask ourselves in this durational sequence of socially constructed knowledge, what is the fee for a clear view of the valley below? What are the costs, if you will, for more bite in the real world outside of the strict confines of the art world? There are indeed some interesting consequences that arise once the traditional content selection, display, and spectatorship sequence is surrendered.

Of course, it is self-evident that authorship is beyond re-purposing in such a co-constructive *modus operandi*. In any case that simple relation between the author and the work can no longer be replicated. In Wright's new politics of the user, ownership is no longer coextensive with content. It is in that sense, for example, that the music industry has already been unwillingly precipitated into this new political economy where the relation between content and remuneration has dissolved. It is also necessary in such content-generating practices to abandon the role of the cultural expert in favour of a more engaged, relational mode. An epistemological encounter is called for with social fields that may demand entirely new modes of knowledge production and representation.

Certainly the space of the studio as the site of a singular, contemplative production is abandoned for a socialised, conversational space of inquiry, content gathering, conversational encounter, and the meeting of contesting narratives. The studio in its usological mode of operations is rendered into a site of assemblage for co-constructions and re-workings of collective experience.

There are also transformations required in the notion of the exhibition as a point of closure for the material transformation of the means of representation. Instead, the gallery can become an extension of the content-generating space of the studio. The shift of the ethnographic ground into a quasi-public arena brings into play new possibilities for dialogue, content validation practices, and encounters with new publics beyond the immediate field of the cultural and social interest orbiting within the micro-political economy of the project itself.

And finally, in our own practice where the arc of a project has had a manifestation in the gallery space, we have observed a transformation of the disinterested spectator into an invested user who already has high stakes in both the means of representation and distribution. It is in this way that the educational function within the discourse and practice of the contemporary art museum will have to reconsider (has already reconsidered) the terms of engagement. The challenge is to create new terms of engagement where the museum becomes one of the agents in the co-construction of the process of knowledge production rather than decoders for an audience always already on the outside of a self-contained curatorial sequence.

### Notes

1 Stephen Wright, *Toward a Lexicon of Usership*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2013. pg. 40

2 Irish Museum of Modern Art online, 2014 <[http://www.imma.ie/en/page\\_236730.htm](http://www.imma.ie/en/page_236730.htm)>

3 Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis: London, 1987, in Preparatory Notes for *The Spatial Self* Public Talk.

4 Preparatory Notes for *The Spatial Self* Public Talk

5 Stephen Wright, *Toward a Lexicon of Usership*, pg. 66

6 The Van Abbemuseum commissioned *Toward a Lexicon of Usership* on the occasion of the exhibition *Museum of Arte Útil*, which ran from 7 December 2013 to 30 March 2014.

7 Stephen Wright, *Toward a Lexicon of Usership*, pg. 1.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid, pg. 39.

11 Symptomatically, we have art critics writing books about how to navigate that transition from user to spectator. Most recently, Ossian Ward's *Ways of Looking: How to Experience Contemporary Art* (Ward, 2014). And if you liked that, you might also like *How to Read Contemporary Art* by Michael Wilson (2013) or *Your Everyday Art World* by Lane Relyea (2013), and so on.

12 Raqs Media Collective, *The Rest of Now*, Curatorial Essay for *Manifesta 7*, 2008 Available from: <http://www.raqsmediacollective.net/images/pdf/0cda929c-8256-458c-99de-6bfd512b9c1d.pdf>

13 John Whyte, *Eight Great Expectations: A Landmark and Unique Social Regeneration Plan for Fatima Mansions*, The Fatima Regeneration Board, Dublin, 2005.

14 In the early to mid 2000s, at the height of Ireland's economic boom, a number of public housing flat complexes in Dublin were earmarked for regeneration. Public Private Partnership became the primary mechanism for the delivery of these proposed regenerations. At one point, a total of twelve contracts were in the pipeline. Despite the protracted and in many cases difficult negotiations between Dublin City Council and residents of the flat complexes to advance these extensive

social and infrastructural changes, with the demise of the Celtic Tiger from 2008 onwards, these regeneration projects were summarily abandoned. See: John Bissett, *Regeneration: public good or private profit?*, Tasc at New Island, 2008.

15 The impetus for studio provision in Rialto came from the Rialto Development Association (RDA) who owns St. Andrew's Community Centre. The Studio team that manages Studio 468 includes representation from the RDA, Dublin City Council and Common Ground, a locally-based arts developmental agency.

16 Ailbhe Murphy, "Contextualising the Artist: Studio 468 and the Request to Engage" in Logan Sisley and Siobhan Geoghan eds., *Studio 468: A Working Space in Rialto*, Studio 468 and Common Ground, Dublin, 2010.

17 Artists who have worked long-term with the Rialto Youth Project include musicians Sean Millar and Mark Ellison, filmmaker Enda O'Brien, and visual artist Fiona Whelan.

18 These kinds of appropriations are usually re-workings of the spaces we encounter within the spatio-temporal arc of a project. They have included, a house in a neighbourhood, a range of gallery settings, and most recently, a mobile home at a seaside resort.

**Vagabond Reviews** is an interdisciplinary platform combining socially engaged art and research practice. As artists and researchers we are interested in engaging broader publics in alternative forms of cultural participation and knowledge production. Current projects include *Scientia Civitatis: Missing Titles for the exhibition Phoenix Rising*, *Art and the Civic Imagination* curated by Logan Sisley at the Hugh Lane, Dublin's Municipal Gallery and the *Arcade Project*, which explores arts-based pedagogy in youth work with the Rialto Youth Project in Dublin. Other projects include *(In)Visible Labour Factorium* for the National Women's Council of Ireland's *Legacy Project*, curated by Valerie Connor. The *Legacy project* exhibition 'Still, We Work' was exhibited at the *Gallery of Photography and 126 Gallery, Galway* as part of the *Tulca Visual Arts Festival* in November in 2013 and in *Cork City Hall* and *EU House Dublin* in 2014. Also the *Sliabh Bán Art House* (2011-2012) a participatory public art project commissioned by *Galway City Council's Arts Office* in the west of Ireland and *City (Re)Searches Experiences of Being Public* (2012-2013) an interdisciplinary arts-based research initiative which engaged with questions of community-based culture. Extending over four cities in Ireland, Lithuania and the Netherlands, *City (Re)Searches* was produced by *Blue Drum, Community Arts Partnership Belfast* and the *Kaunas Biennial, Lithuania*.

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