

introduction from nottingham trent university

IN THIS PLACE



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On behalf of all the staff and students at Nottingham Trent University (NTU), our conference partners in the city of Nottingham and Cumulus we want to take this opportunity to thank all those who took part in the conference 'In this Place' and for making it such an imaginative and thought provoking event. In particular we would like to take this opportunity to thank Tracey Newton, Sarah Connor, Sarah Dossor and Venu Dhupa from NTU for their creative input, making the conference and this subsequent publication such a success. Our sincere thanks to them.

So to the title and questions for the conference and this publication

'In this Place'

■ What are the questions, choices and conversations we need to have as we create the future we are becoming?

There is much commentary that suggests that the people, actions and objects that inhabit a place, pass through it or the choices we make in it, define a place. Hence a place is not fixed by any one definition; it is under constant negotiation and must also be seen in relation to the situation of conflict in both a positive and negative sense. Survival and conflict in places is such a reality today and affects so many people, their choices, actions, voices and subsequently the precarious futures of places. What are the questions, choices and conversations we need to have as we create the future we are becoming?

The conference and publication asks how a shift is taking place from art and design being seen or defined as a 'service' and is increasingly now embracing socially engaged practices. This is critically framed in response to an understanding of our ability to produce and consume images and objects via a 'market economy', or to be more accurate the product of neoliberalism. There has been a lot of critical debate regarding a situation of 'exhaustion in capital'.....
...we produce more than we can consume and the by-product of the

production has led to unimaginable impact on our environment, coupled with the impact of social and material displacement. This of course is not design or arts fault, yet here we are with potential choices as we create and form a future creative culture. For example, in the UK we are now responding to the very



pressing question facing our future relationship and membership with the EU and the impact this creates.

With some of these things in mind, 'In this Place' raises an essential platform for us to discuss, inform, share and direct critical questions that can or should be asked. It has been said many times that in a school of art and design there are distinct

differences between art and design – practically, emotionally, conceptually and employability. It goes something like this... ..Design seems to want to solve problems, create solutions and answer questions. Art seems to want to ask questions, create problems and unfix solutions that seem fixed. Of course it is not that simplistic and perhaps now these divisions or territorial disputes are no longer of any use. Hence, the conference and publication brings together a wide range of artist, designers, academics, professionals and students.

'In this Place' sets out a desire and ambition to listen to others and be heard by others, as the essential route of knowledge exchange and intercultural dialogue. That this is a 'doing thing' rather than an 'owning thing', where uncertainty and not knowing become creative principles of discovery. Consequently, it is the creation of new opportunities to see and to listen beyond what is known, that has the potential to lead to the creation of new knowledge both personally and culturally. For NTU to be a place for creative knowledge exchange is our firm belief and understanding of the fundamental role of universities and art schools to host, facilitate, frame and enable exchange.