

## **FACILITATOR: Hybrid Critical Dialogues**

**1pm – 4.30pm, 30 January 2009, Hotel du Vin, Birmingham**

### **Happiness, social responsibility and diversity**

**Topic: How do space and place impact on arts practice, perceptions and social engagement?**

Space is form, Place is a social context. Engaging with form or social context involves culture. Cultures help bind people together but they are also what people fight over – particularly when defined by nationalisms, ethnicities linked to 'homelands', and religions. Identities and ideologies are key here. These are seldom fixed in practice, only in stereotypes; they are fluid and complex. In the globalised, urban and largely networked social contexts we inhabit, artists working in the public domain operate within highly complex and constantly changing social relations.

It's scary. That's why some artists say they only deal in form and aesthetics – while it is unsaid, this usually means within a Western cultural framework that defines those terms (Modernism and some Post-modernisms). Some say that that they cannot be experts in everything, form and aesthetics is what they are taught – and anyway art shouldn't be used to put a band-aid on social problems. It's asking too much.

Yet artists are citizens, social beings operating alongside and with everyone else. They don't have to set themselves up – or be set up - as outsiders, analysts, having all the solutions or non of them. They make their work out of the social fabric they inhabit: physically, culturally, ideologically. They focus that - the work becomes a distillation of the desires of a constituency (whatever that is). This, I believe, results from a transformation through critique, collaboration and communication. It involves social and visual processes inextricably linked. In a sense, the work forms a 'lens' which creates a focal point in the energies of transformation – it can shift a way of thinking, of seeing, of being in the world. It can also be ignored or attacked.

**Note on Poor Commissioning Practices:** provide 5 – 10 images, if you're short-listed then you get paid (usually a pittance) to produce an outline design. How can you engage with the social relations, engage people in any meaningful way, unless you put in a large amount of unpaid work? This practice is random, exploitative of artists, and does not take seriously any form of social engagement

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Full transcript of the discussion will be pod-cast by Hybrid. Also see Hybrid website ([www.hybridconsulting.org.uk](http://www.hybridconsulting.org.uk))