



**re : public**

asking the question 'can something happen in public again?'

**re : public-  
cation**

The harnessing of creativity  
for urban growth agendas... or,  
doing differently.

exhibition materials 4/2/10-13/3/10

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## The harnessing of creativity for urban growth agendas... or, doing differently.

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**Tuesday 16 February: Temple Bar Gallery 18:00**

**Wednesday 17th February: Temple Bar Gallery 13:00**

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Facilitators: Neil Gray (researcher & writer) & Leigh French (co-editor, Variant magazine) - Variant Events.

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### 1. Outline

Leigh French and Neil Gray will look at the role of the artist in a time when 'creativity' is increasingly harnessed for urban growth agendas (property development and gentrification). The potential of 'the arts' to rehabilitate 'unproductive' urban space and stimulate the property market has long been established by gimlet-eyed developers (Manhattan, Shoreditch, Barcelona, etc.) and Glasgow's Merchant City is but one example of that now shopworn process. Despite increasing skepticism around hyperbolic 'creative city' claims, the creative city policy framework is still being applied by countless slow-learning cities worldwide.

Using the geographer David Harvey's analysis of the 'art of rent', we will outline the drive towards monopoly rents so typical of advanced capitalism. Harvey's thesis notes that cities are now routinely traded as commodities in themselves. 'Particularity' and 'uniqueness' (of places, spaces, buildings, culture, etc.) provide the 'marks of distinction' which are deemed to confer economic value on particular places in an era of fierce inter-city competition for inward investment.

We will map out how these tendencies have been instrumentally pursued in Glasgow's 'Merchant City' through the 'Arts-Led Property Strategy', as identified by Neil Gray in his writing for Variant & Mute magazines. Taking to task the guru of the Creative City thesis, Richard Florida, we will suggest that the emergence of a so-called 'creative class' has been wholly dependent on a 'supporting infrastructure' of an increasingly insecure and underpaid service class - Florida admitting as much himself.

After this critical introduction to the 'creative city', we will show some clips from the film-making collective 'The London Particular' (LP). LP films address the role of the artist in ongoing forms of gentrification in and around Shoreditch and the east end of London, and show a model of practice which challenges the specialised role of the arts practitioner by actively engaging with questions of place and social relations more often than not eschewed by artists.

We will finish with Harvey, who suggests that capital has always to appropriate and extract surpluses from local differences, local cultural variations and aesthetic meanings of no matter what the origin. This can often mean the retention, or courting, of apparently subversive or transgressive elements. The shameless commodification of everything is, after all, a hallmark of capitalism. Rather than pursue a counsel of despair however, the problem for oppositional movements or independent artists is, as Harvey argues, to use the validation of particularity, uniqueness, authenticity, culture and aesthetic meanings in ways that open up new possibilities and alternatives...

We want to suggest, as one example, that the video work of David Panos and Anja Kirschner works through these problems by reworking narratives around landscape, history and memory, to evoke different possibilities and meanings to the notion of 'creative entrepreneurialism' advocated by city boosters and property developers...

### 2. Follow Up Session

Wednesday 17th February: Temple Bar Gallery 13:00 informal follow-up session a comparative discussion - responses to creative cities narratives Cued by screening of the films:

THE LONDON PARTICULAR (2004, The London Particular, 30mins) Part 1 of a full-length film about the strange, neoliberal 'renaissance' of East London. This is a rough edit tracing the renewal of the city from the gentrification of Shoreditch, through the looting of social housing in Hackney, to the sordid reconfiguration of life, death and work on the fringe of the City of London.  
[<http://thelondonparticular.org/items/video.html>]

DRUMCHAPEL : THE FRUSTRATION GAME (1989, John Calder, De-classed Elements, 20 mins). A damning indictment of local authority enterprise schemes which are contrived to look as if they are there to help the disenfranchised but in fact serve the purpose of greater social control. Made by De-Classed Elements in the late 1980s, a video group who were based in Drumchapel, Glasgow, it is as relevant today as it was then. It was screened as part of The Midnight of the Decade, Transmission Gallery, 26 October - 26 October 1989. Screenings and discussion with Variant Video - Frustration Game, Mud and Stars; Workers City, the Subversive Past; De-Classed Elements - Drumchapel Community Centre; First Strike, Portrait of an Activist - Doug Dibble.

#### INFORMATION POOL

For a fuller understanding of the work referenced, so as to better facilitate the discussion, or if you would like to follow up on any of the issues raised, we recommend also looking at:  
[<http://www.variant.org.uk/events.html#L1>]

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<http://creativescotland.blogspot.com>

Creative Scotland is the proposed merger and expanded remit of the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen. It is an avowedly entrepreneurial exploit. Yet marketplace "truths" require far greater scrutiny, as has been amply demonstrated in recent months...

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## **re : public-ation series**

The **Re : Public-ation** series is a series of texts that provide short readings which introduce key terms and ideas in the debate on public-ness and contemporary culture. These are for educational and cultural use only and intended not for resale. These are produced in conjunction with the exhibition project **re : public** at temple bar gallery co-organised by Temple Bar Gallery and Studios the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media (GradCAM) 4<sup>th</sup> February – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

**re : public** is curated by Daniel Jewesbury and features contributions by Igor Grubić : Owen Hatherley : Peter Liversidge : Aisling O’Beirn : Nina Power : Robert Anderson : Mark Hackett : Sandra Johnston : The Thamesmead Archive : Dennis McNulty : Simon Sheikh : Robert Porter : Leigh French : Neil Gray : Dan Shipsides : Seamus Nolan : Dead Public : Amanda Ralph : MA Art in the Contemporary World (NCAD) : MA Art in Public (Ulster) : *Fold* : *Variant* : Tech.Know : Linda Doyle (CTVR) : Experiential Aesthetics : Event: Praxis: and others...

**re : public** coincides with the major five day international conference Arts Research: Publics and Purposes at Dublin City Council’s new “Wood Quay venue” at the Civic Offices in Dublin’s city centre, and just beside Temple Bar. Other shows coinciding with **re : public** and the conference include Critique of Archival Reason curated by Henk Slager at the RHA, and Sound Re: Sound by Sarah Dunne , curated by Brian Fay at Broadcast Gallery.

For more information on all of these events see ([www.gradcam.ie](http://www.gradcam.ie))

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