





Queensgate Indoor Market, Huddersfield. Laura Mateescu, 2020.

Queensgate Indoor Market in Huddersfield, a large town in the North of England, has a roof made of asymmetric hyperbolic paraboloid shells. But this architectural term belies the charm of the 1970s modernist concrete columns, which at the top spread like umbrellas or the underside of mushrooms. Under the columns, traders sell fruit, vegetables, greetings cards, jumpers, batteries and second hand books. Increasingly, threaded between the thriving stalls are vacant spaces and empty units. Since 2018, the *Temporary Contemporary* initiative and the questions that underpin it have started to weave between the columns too.

*Temporary Contemporary* is a partnership project of Kirklees Council and the School of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Huddersfield. Its aim is to provide a platform for original and inspirational exhibitions, performances and research. It forms cultural hubs and test-sites for creative production, collaboration and situated curatorial practices. Its principle question is: *how might creative thinking and action be nurtured and lead to the growth of places?* Its principle aim is to create vibrant spaces to support the conditions for creative and cultural activity.

*Temporary Contemporary* has its roots in ROTOR, a project that took place between 2012 and 2017 at Huddersfield Art Gallery. ROTOR was a programme of research exhibitions and public engagement developed by the School of Art, Design and Architecture at the University of Huddersfield, in partnership with the gallery and funded by Arts Council England.<sup>1</sup>

Marking the culmination of the thirteen ROTOR exhibitions within this programme, the School hosted a conference entitled *Culture, Community, Creativity*, held in January 2018 at the Lawrence Batley theatre in Huddersfield. *Culture, Community, Creativity* disseminated and celebrated ROTOR's outcomes and set the goal of exploring new challenges and possibilities for creative and cultural activity in the district. The speakers, panellists and workshop facilitators were invited from a range of backgrounds and breadth of specialisms, both in the United Kingdom and internationally.<sup>2</sup> ROTOR was positioned as the starting point for a series of engaging discussions around the challenges and benefits of projects that produce the conditions for creative thinking and action to flourish. It was through these discussions that the mission of *Temporary Contemporary* began to find its form.

The first year of *Temporary Contemporary* took place in Queensgate Indoor Market with the development of three distinct spaces for arts and cultural activity: 'Market Gallery' (a white cube gallery space presenting research exhibitions from staff and postgraduate students at the School of Art, Design and Architecture), 'Market Hardware' (a space to showcase undergraduate student work) and 'Market Showcase' (spaces for artists working locally and cultural organisations to initiate a wide variety of activities). These spaces were created in collaboration with the Strategic Lead for Markets, Queensgate Indoor Market and the Arts & Creative Development Team at Kirklees Council.

Some of the highlights of the *Temporary Contemporary* Market Showcase programme in 2018 and 2019 included

a mural commissioned for the market by artist Kasia Breska, a long-form consultancy event by artist Jean McEwan titled 'Growing Cultures', which invited people to imagine, dream and talk about what tomorrow's culture in the Kirklees region could be and look like using seed planting, mapping and zine making, and the WOVEN in Kirklees textiles festival, which temporarily occupied several of the vacant market stalls. Shortly after its launch, Market Gallery was the site of a collaboration with Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (HMCF) who used the venue to showcase the work of composer in residence Christian Marclay. In October 2018, *Temporary Contemporary* won Innovation of the Year in the Blachere Market Awards by the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA).

The spaces programmed by the School of Art, Design and Architecture in collaboration with Kirklees Council are complemented and augmented by Parlour by Parley, led by independent arts professional Victoria McCorkell. Parley is an artist and audience development agency that considers the spaces and places where arts and cultural conversation, connection and learning take place. The name 'Parley' derives from the old French verb "parler" to speak, rendering explicit the role of voice and dialogue in Parley's activities. Parley has occupied a space in Queensgate Market since 2018 which remains permanently open for use by the community. The Parlour space hosts the monthly evening *Temporary Contemporary* happenings, where visitors are invited to come to the market after opening hours to exhibition previews, performances, music and social events. More recently, these happenings have expanded to the vacant retail units of the Piazza Shopping Centre, as part of a shared programme where creative communities collaborating with *Temporary Contemporary* showcase their work and practices with a range of different audiences. *Temporary Contemporary* has always been receptive to the idea that it is an evolving and changing live environment; an ecology of continuous change, adaptation, participation and collaboration.

This book primarily documents and reflects upon the first year of the curatorial programme for Market Gallery, which comprised seventeen exhibitions, but it is always mindful of the negotiation between the different strands of the programme and the context of the market itself. The following four chapters outline the underpinning themes of the initiative within the context of live action research. These themes are: place-based making, cultural and mixed ecologies, the apparatus of viewing, and the exhibition as research method.



[Left & below] Parlour by Parley space. Images courtesy of Victoria McCorkell (pictured right) and Laura Mateescu.



Situating Practices exhibition (18 May-1 June 2019) curated by Claire Booth-Kurpnieks featuring Quarry I and Quarry II (2018) by Julia McKinlay.



Kasia Breska, Queensgate Market Mural Project, Huddersfield, 2018.



Ryan Durrant and Katy Suggit, School of Art Design and Architecture at Temporary Contemporary happening.

Exterior Queensgate Market, Huddersfield. Image courtesy Laura Mateescu.



In the first chapter, Dr Rowan Bailey discusses the terms ‘action research’ and ‘place-based making’ in the context of *Temporary Contemporary*. As the lead coordinator of the Market Gallery programme, Bailey takes this opportunity to consider how live action research has been a means for facilitating a ‘mixed cultural ecology’ in Huddersfield, making reference to the insights generated out of collaborative working with a variety of stakeholders and beneficiaries. The provocation here is that grass roots initiatives from within a place create its character, which in turn renders visible a network of exchanges between cultural practices. The chapter also discusses the exhibitions that have considered ‘place’ in, with and through visual cultural and creative practices: *Place, Space, Action* (6-14 April 2018) curated by Dr Rowan Bailey, *Uncanny Valley* (7-21 December 2018) curated by Nick Deakin, *Temporary Tactical Urbanism* (13 March-6 April 2019) curated by Dr Ioanni Delsante, *What’s this dull town to me?* (13 March-6 April 2019) by Andrew Taylor and Katrina Whitehead, *Synthetic Spaces* (31 January- 4 March 2019) by Professor Nic Clear and Hyun Jun Park and *Situating Practices* (18 May-1 June 2019) curated by Claire Booth-Kurpnieks.

*Temporary Contemporary* questions what can be done to support the cultural ecology of Huddersfield. The term ‘cultural ecology’, as outlined in the Arts and Humanities Research Council report ‘The Ecology of Culture’,<sup>3</sup> includes everything around art and culture, including people, places, relationships, technology, food and drink. Using the metaphor of ‘ecology’ draws attention to the relationships formed within an ecosystem, including shared values that contribute towards collaborative exchange. As John Holden, author of the report, explains:

*Particular individuals instigate work, but culture is only ever realised through the skills of many, and only becomes ‘culture’ once it is communicated and received. Seeing culture as a communal endeavour, involving all the elements of creation, communication and reception, embeds the artist in fact not at the centre, nor at the (equally romantic) periphery, but in a social network.*<sup>4</sup>

*Temporary Contemporary* expands on the term ‘cultural ecology’ by paying attention to the role of ‘mixed ecologies’ and to the ways in which art and non-art practices develop and negotiate with each other. The cultural interventions of *Temporary Contemporary* are not intended to overwrite the original purpose of the market or other vacant spaces that it occupies, but rather to exist alongside them within the ecology, and prompt reflection on the negotiation of research, art, craft, architecture, music,

'greening,' sport, public meeting spaces, food and drink. In Professor Donal Fitzpatrick's chapter, he reflects on the terms 'cultural ecology' and 'mixed ecology' and focuses on the exhibitions that best exemplify 'ecology' in a broad sense: *Black Bag* (10-29 September 2018) by Ryan Durrant, *Flood* (7-21 December 2018) by Richard Mulhearn, *The Laundry Pile* (24 June- 13 July 2019) curated by Dr Jade Lord, Emma Rigby and Lizzie Harrison, *Quilting Together* (24 June- 13 July 2019) by Nicola Perren and *Making Material Memories* (15 April-3 May 2019) by Charlotte Goldthorpe.

As well as being collaborative, *Temporary Contemporary* is an appeal for assessments of cultural value that are not primarily rooted in the economic. It has been concerned with aesthetic, social, educational, well-being and experiential values and what they contribute to the cultural ecology of Huddersfield. This consideration of values (in the plural) places the initiative within a constellation of projects including: *In Certain Places in Lancashire*, UK,<sup>5</sup> the festivals in Johannesburg that Kim Guerney documents in *The Art of Public Space: Curating and Re-imagining the Ephemeral City* (2015),<sup>6</sup> and the *People Making Places* project in Yorkshire during 2002-2004.<sup>7</sup> All of these projects share a commitment to place-based making activity through creative thinking and action.

Dr Anna Powell and Dr Linda Jean Pittwood in their chapter discuss the broad notion of looking in relation to the apparatuses of viewing, including the knowledges that audiences bring to an experience of viewing, and the role of image in the construction of memory. Powell and Pittwood look closely at five exhibitions in the Market Gallery that explored representation itself, monuments and memory: *Showgirl Manifesto* (11-27 October 2018) by Dr Alison J Carr, *Photography and Lived Experience* (14-21 June 2019), *Nocturne* (15 April-3 May 2019) by Dr Stella Baraklianou, *A proposal for a monument for Carl Einstein* (10-26 January 2019) by Dr Dale Holmes, *Empire of Memory* (10-26 January 2019) by Garry Clarkson, and *Bigfoot in West Belfast* (14-21 June 2019) by Dr Liam Devlin.

As a form of 'live action research', *Temporary Contemporary* aims to facilitate the conditions of possibility for transformation and change through its exhibition programme which offers up social commentary, provocations for thinking, and access to diverse forms of art, design and architecture with and for a broad range of audiences. These audiences include: university lecturers, artists, local artisan producers, musicians, students and members of the general public. Reflecting on this, Professor



Nic Clear considers on the role of exhibitions in research practice and art, design and architecture pedagogies and discusses the Market Gallery exhibition *Synthetic Spaces* (31 January-4 March 2019) that he curated with Hyun Jun Park.

*Temporary Contemporary* has created much-needed opportunities for creative practitioners to congregate and exchange ideas through regular evening events ('happenings'). These evening events have generated opportunities for local artisan retailers like Magic Rock brewery and KWAS wine shop and bar to support these activities and share audiences and customers. Moreover, in a relatively short period of time, the *Temporary Contemporary* programme has moved on to populate other vacant retail units in the town and has become central to the thinking of Kirklees Council in its approach to culture and regeneration for Huddersfield.

The collaborators involved in *Temporary Contemporary* include: Kath Davies, Strategic Lead for Cultural Development for Kirklees Council and Chris Cotton, Strategic Lead for Markets for Kirklees Council, alongside staff from the School of Art, Design and Architecture. To ensure the quality, sustainability and value of *Temporary Contemporary*, the project is overseen by a board of advisors comprising Dr Helen Pheby, Senior Curator at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Dr Derek Horton, Artist, Writer, Curator and Consultant, the Directors of HATCH, Natalie Walton and Alison McIntyre, and Natalie Rudd, Senior Curator Arts Council Collection. More stakeholders and participants are listed in the acknowledgements section at the back of this book.

The conclusion of this book argues that although dealing with a specific place, the *Temporary Contemporary* research has provided new insights into the futures of art and culture in towns like Huddersfield. As *Temporary Contemporary* moves into its second year of programming, in parallel to the offer in Queensgate Market, arts organisations from the region have temporarily moved into vacant units of the nearby 'Piazza' shopping centre. This collaborative effort to occupy vacant retail spaces and embrace *Temporary Contemporary* as a concept, has led to proposals for a Public Art Plan for Huddersfield, and to include it as part of the planning for the future 'cultural heart' of Huddersfield. The growing visibility of *Temporary Contemporary* as part of a broad portfolio of mixed cultural ecologies is contributing to a change in mindset about the ways in which place-based making can be an opportunity to activate space with all kinds of creative activity.

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<sup>1</sup> For further details about the ROTOR programme and its research see Swindells, S., & Powell, A. (Eds.) (2014). *“What Is to Be Done?”: Cultural Leadership and Public Engagement in Art and Design Education*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing and Powell, A., & Swindells, S. (2015). 'ROTOR Transdisciplinary dialogue and debate: A Public Engagement Case Study'. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 184, 79-86.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.05.056>.

<sup>2</sup> Speakers included: Simon Armitage, Dr Anna Souto, We Are Public, Patrick Fox, Lee Corner and Phil Wood.

<sup>3</sup> Holden, J. (2015) 'The Ecology of Culture A Report commissioned by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Cultural Value Project.' Arts and Humanities Research Council. The full report can be found at: [ahrc.ukri.org/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/the-ecology-of-culture/](http://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/the-ecology-of-culture/) [accessed 6 February 2020].

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> The project is documented here:  
<https://incertainplaces.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Guerney, K (2015) *The Art of Public Space: Curating and Re-imagining the Ephemeral City*. London, New York and Shanghai: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>7</sup> Powell, R. J. (2004) *People Making Places: Imagination in the Public Realm* (Art Catalogue). London: Public Arts.



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