



University of Brighton

ALICE FOX

EXCHANGE

Principles of communicative exchange through
collaborative art practice

RESEARCH OUTPUT



**Paradox of Praxis 1 #2
(Pushing Together)**
Alice Fox, Ashmina Ranjit

Exchange is a series of four collaborative performance artworks, developed and disseminated through workshops and arts-informed encounters, which extend Fox's long-term research into how communication is fostered and developed, especially with those who are vulnerable or under-represented.

- 'Taxi Guff Gaff' (2016)
- 'Paradox of Praxis 1 #2 (Pushing Together)' (2016)
- 'Frozen Unfrozen' (2016)
- 'Walking with Milk' (2017)

Fox is internationally recognised in the field of inclusive arts practices, and this research builds on her exploration of the practices of 'expanded listening' (MacPherson, Fox et al., 2016) and the aesthetics of exchange in the context of community, wellbeing and individual development.

Exchange



TAXI GUFF GAFF (AUGUST 2016)

Fox invited 13 Nepali artists, writers and thinkers to accompany four taxi drivers on a journey through the cityscape of Kathmandu. Sitting side by side in the back of local taxis, participants collaboratively registered erratic movement through making marks on large strips of paper, while witnessing the ever-changing city. After the journey, Fox explored the experience in dialogue with the participants. The results of the journey were presented in eight collaborative drawings and a short film, first exhibited in the Arts Council Building, Kathmandu in 2017.

Taxi Guff Gaff
Alice Fox, with invited
Nepali artists

Exchange

DOCUMENTARY, TAXI GUFF GAFF



Documentaries following the performance work, made by Alice Fox and her collaborators

Taxi Guff Gaff
Kathmandu (August 2016)
Access to film at <https://vimeo.com/182976667>

DOCUMENTARY, PARADOX OF PRAXIS 1 #2 (PUSHING TOGETHER)



Paradox of Praxis 1 #2 (Pushing Together)
Kathmandu (August 2016)
Access to film at <https://vimeo.com/182977362>

Exchange



PARADOX OF PRAXIS 1 #2 (PUSHING TOGETHER) (AUGUST 2016)

Paradox of Praxis 1 #2
(Pushing Together)
Alice Fox, Ashmina Ranjit

Alice Fox performed 'Paradox of Praxis 1 #2 (Pushing Together)' in Kathmandu with performance artist Ashmina Ranjit. Each performer, connected through their joint exertion, pushed a large block of ice, quietly finding strength and direction from the companionship of the other.

Dressed in red silk, the performers navigated the ever-diminishing ice through a route that started in the 16th century Durbar Square, persevering through the cracked, jagged and bumpy city landscape to the modern area of Durbar Marg, concluding at the Parliament Buildings where the ice had finally melted to nothing.

The work honours and re-contextualises Francis Alÿs' performance the 'Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Making Something Leads To Nothing)' originally performed in Mexico in 1997.

Exchange



FROZEN UNFROZEN (SEPTEMBER 2016)

Fox designed and performed 'Frozen Unfrozen' at the *Give and Take* opening event at Tate Exchange on 28 September 2016. Two performers, facing each other at opposite ends of a long strip of cloth, stretched to pass a block of frozen Thames Water between them. As their body heat melted the ice and it became smaller, they slowly stepped closer towards each other. The audience witnessed the process of exchange building connection and intimacy between performers.

Frozen Unfrozen
Tate Exchange
Give and Take opening,
Tate Modern, London.
Alice Fox with David Cotterell

Exchange



WALKING WITH MILK (KATHMANDU TRIENNIAL, APRIL 2017)

Fox designed the work in which five international women performers walked through Basantapur Durbar Square carrying bowls filled to the brim with milk, while student volunteers posed pre-written questions to onlookers. Over 60 onlookers decided to pick up bowls and join them on their journey. Together they slowly progressed forward through the city taking care not to spill the milk.

Walking with Milk

Alice Fox, with Ashmina Ranjit
Marie Julia Bollansée,
Monali Meher and
Ryan Elisabeth Reid

Exchange

FROZEN UNFROZEN



Performance film of
Frozen Unfrozen
Tate Exchange, Tate Modern
London

Frozen Unfrozen
Give and Take, Tate Exchange opening event, Tate Modern
London (September 2016)
Access to film at <https://vimeo.com/185808822>

DOCUMENTARY, WALKING WITH MILK



Documentary footage
taken during
the performance of
Walking with Milk
Made by Maria Julia Bollansée
with Alice Fox
and collaborators

Walking with Milk
Kathmandu (April 2017)
Access to film at <https://vimeo.com/219227808>

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



Taxi Guff Gaff
Sample of drawings produced
during movement through city
August 2016

Fox works with international performance artists and publics to question what facilitates communicative exchange, and how arts practices can develop an expanded conception of listening as 'being-with' (MacPherson, Fox et al., 2016).

Her collaborative performance work investigates non-verbal conversation and, in particular, asks how materials and practices can influence a sense of self and other, and how groups can make conscious the process of exchange between individuals.

A range of questions unique to each artwork are asked during workshops and sometimes as a backdrop to the performance. Student volunteers, for example, asked questions of the onlookers during 'Paradox of Praxis 1 #2 (Pushing Together)'.

Fox articulates a series of overarching questions, developing these to relate to a specific performance, in the context of the enquiry.

- What is the relationship between bodily motion and communicative exchange?
- In a performative environment, how do material artefacts and environments function in the developing closeness between newly-acquainted people?
- How does the concept of 'exchange' help us understand 'being with' another?

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Fox is a reputed practitioner and educator in the field of inclusive arts, and her recent practice work extends the body of research with inclusive art groups (*Degrees of Separation*, Tate Modern, 2005; *Smudged*, Tate Modern, 2008) and the material brought together in her co-publication *Inclusive Arts Practice and Research: A Critical Manifesto* (Fox and MacPherson, 2015).

Her performance practice is grounded within the paradigm of inclusive arts and aims to advance arts-based methods of listening and exchange in response to the challenges of social isolation and cultural exclusion. Performances are designed to respond to theories as to how combinations of movement and arts practice can enable rich thinking and conversation. The activities of walking and drawing have, for example, been shown to support certain kinds of thinking (Anderson, 2004; Glaser, 2008) and Fox tests the potential and limits of this through collaborative performance.

Fox structured her enquiry around the notion of non-verbal meeting, informed by Tim Ingold's concept of 'dwelling together' (Ingold, 2000), Jean-Luc Nancy's expanded concept of listening (Nancy, 2002), which accepts that listening involves attuning to that which is beyond signification, and Richard Sennett's work on cooperation (Sennett, 2013). Artistically, Fox draws on Francis Alÿs' work, both specifically, in her homage to Alÿs' 'Paradox of Praxis 1' (1997), but also in a conscious extension of this work in a new range of contexts. Across all her performances, she explores the artistic and human value inherent in the process of making something that leads to nothing, and asks what can be learnt about exchange and togetherness from ultimately futile activities alongside another being.

This research aims to address the issue of excluded voices within the cultural sector and sits alongside Fox's research on the 'listening space; the practice of expanded listening' (MacPherson, Fox et al., 2016).



**Frozen Unfrozen
Tate Exchange
Give and Take opening**
Alice Fox with David Cotterell

Still from performance film showing the closing stages as the performers get closer on the ash strewn floor and the ice has almost completely melted into water from their body heat

RESEARCH PROCESS



Fox constructs diverse performance pieces through collaboration and detailed understanding of the cultural and geographical contexts in which she works. As well as creating artworks in collaboration with international performance artists, she also works with amateur groups, devising workshops that develop into and conclude with a performance.



The research pays particular attention to the construction of conducive spaces, the attunement of collaborators and the use of art materials as 'meeting points', which enable a non-verbal conversation to take place, exploring the temporalities of expanded, attentive, curious listening. These activities design creative ways to reproduce spoken conversations aiming at dialogic rather than dialectical exchange, as described by Sennett (2013). The aim is to develop an enhanced understanding or meeting of the people we are in conversation with rather than a desire to bring them around to any particular point of view.



Post-event, these experiences were explored in dialogue with participants, which provided insights into the capacity of this practice to rapidly create generous and empathetic relationships. Fox's careful process of co-production allows for dialogue and observation.

Stills from documentary film for Taxi Guff Gaff

Showing selected artists in the rear seats of their taxis, engaging with the city and the closeness of each other during the shared drawing exercise

Film available at <https://vimeo.com/182976667>

She continually asks the question of participants as to what form an 'exchange' might take. The material objects she brings to the performance have included frozen water and fabric, each taking a symbolic role as well as a cultural one. In 'Frozen Unfrozen' (2016), for example, the ice block that passed between the performers was created from Thames water, referencing the river flowing past the venue into which the liquid would return.

Similarly, the environment where each performance is held plays a direct and essential role, with exchange occurring between people, or through an object, and also through the city environment and the cultural memory of its people. In 'Paradox of Praxis 1 #2 (Pushing Together)' (2016), Fox and Ranjit follow a historically significant route through Kathmandu. In 'Guff Gaff Taxi' (2016), Fox examines how the familiarity of the route in Nepal, during a side-by-side taxi journey, can lead to conversational exchange and how the journey itself relates to the participant artists' thinking.

To extend this research, as well as the performance outworks conducted with fellow performance artists, Fox established a number of encounters through which community members developed a performance through creative workshops. There were four primary examples in which Fox worked within museum and gallery contexts, drawing together the institutions' specialists, visitors and artists to consider the wider scope of exchange and expanded listening. These were held in Taiwan, Korea and London.



LOVE IS A PROCESS: PASSING AND CUTTING (TAIWAN, NOVEMBER 2017)

Fox developed an art-based encounter workshop for a group of Taiwanese elders and younger museum workers, drawing on and extending the understanding she had gained from her performance work throughout Exchange.



Supported by the British Council, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts and the University of Brighton, the workshop introduced ice and ribbon as material objects alongside patterns of movement, developing the specific method introduced in 'Frozen Unfrozen' (p.06). Participants explored the theme of love and collaborated in the question of whether the sensuous material, and the sharing of gesture and process through passing ice and cutting ribbon together, could reveal communicative exchanges of unexpected types and depths.



Love is a Process: Passing and Cutting

(November 2017)

Access to film at <https://vimeo.com/247121680>



Stills from workshop film of
**Love is a Process:
Passing and Cutting**

LEARNING TO LOOK: LOOKING AND WALKING AWAY (LONDON, MAY 2018)



Stills from film of performance and interviews with participants for Looking and Walking Away

The live performance 'Looking and Walking Away' was the culmination of a series of six workshops called Learning to Look, which Fox delivered at The National Gallery, London. In these participatory, gallery-based sessions, Fox, together with Dr Christina Bradstreet from the National Gallery, considered visitor experience and the practice of looking at artworks. The performance considered the act of looking when in busy places and the interplay between personal and co-developed experiences within the gallery.

Fox extended her research on patterns of exchange, considering how performative acts would give greater consciousness of what could be gained by looking, and how personal responsiveness to art is affected by exchanges with a populous environment.

Twenty strangers came together at The National Gallery in May 2018, observed the movements of visitors looking at the paintings and, guided by Alice Fox, turned their observations into a performance in Gallery 34, reacting to the works of Stubbs, Turner and Constable on display there.

Unsuspecting visitors were slowly joined by the performers, who quietly duetted through the gallery, making and holding looking poses against the background of an enhanced gallery ambience soundscape. This built into more exaggerated group movements accompanied by waves of abstract noise and sounds suggested by the paintings, such as a child crying, waves and a dog barking. The performers then occupied the small space in front of Constable's 'The Hay Wain' and jostled each other to catch a view of the painting turning to a silent pose with accompanying sound.



Looking and Walking Away
(May 2018)

Access to film at <https://youtu.be/zzLKwto3FUo>



TAKING OFF: DREAMING OF FLYING (TAIWAN, AUGUST 2018)

Fox added to her enquiry by choreographing a series of dances in 2018, again for Taiwanese elders and younger museum workers. This workshop used the soundscape of tropical rain, in collaboration with Hang Li (Sandwiches Studios), whose art installation provided the backdrop for responsive workshop practice.



Participants used movement to develop a co-authored poem, exploring the notion of group and performative acts in the context of the 'expanded listening' principle. The public performance was part of the New Taipei Inclusive Arts Festival in the Unlimited Airport Exhibition at the New Taipei City Arts Centre in Taiwan on 30 August 2018.

The workshops and performance were supported by Sandwiches Studios, the British Council, University of Brighton, Hongdao Senior Citizen Welfare Centre and the New Taipei City Arts Centre.



Stills from workshop film of
Taking off:
Dreaming of Flying

Taking off: Dreaming of Flying
(August 2018)
Access to film at
<https://youtu.be/QQCTWXLYlFw>

IN-OUT (SOUTH KOREA, OCTOBER 2019)

Fox was artist in residence at the [Korean Disability Arts and Culture Centre](#) (KDAC) in Seoul throughout October 2019.

She brought together four South Korean artists with learning disabilities alongside four artists in residence to make a site-specific performance work, 'In-Out', in response to the collections and architecture of the public foyer space in the Seoul Museum of Art.

The month-long programme was titled 'Un-Learning In The Museum'. In partnership with the Korean Disability Arts and Culture Centre and the Seoul Museum of Art, the programme included an invited lecture and an inclusive panel discussion with all the performers. Also included was a series of half-day Inclusive Arts training events for museum curators, staff and artists in residence.

The artists used a series of co-choreographed dances within the soundscape of tropical rain and performers' iterations of the words 'in, out', to explore ideas of understanding and closeness within a newly-acquainted group, performative acts in a gallery space and the practice of expanded listening between fellow performers and beyond them to the audience. It culminated in a public performance using spaces inside and outside the museum.



Photographs taken during Fox's artist in residence work with KDAC, 2019



In-Out
(October 2019)
Access to film at <https://youtu.be/blZoJIVFscs>
Copyright, KDAC

Exchange



In-Out
Performance photographs 2019

RESEARCH INSIGHTS



Taking off: Dreaming of Flying
Still from workshop film
of performance

Fox's research draws attention to processes at work in the understanding of others, recognising that our contemporary communities can be isolated and that traditions around meeting and knowing others have changed under the pressure of modern society.

Termed 'expanded listening', the processes that Fox has illuminated demonstrate the values of non-verbal communication, environment and location and the sharing of material objects that are themselves in a process of change. Fox discovered the importance of creating 'meeting points' through conscious engagement with material objects and highlighted the understanding of elements such as pace, stance and movement in a process of emotional exchange.

It proved important to recognise the framework of exchange as a journey – whether around Kathmandu or across a strip of ash-sprinkled paper. In these experiments there is a greater immediate collegiality, squashing up in the smaller style old-fashioned taxi, for example, which in turn can be seen to provoke a communicative generosity. This provided insight into the effect of the combination of motion, drawing and city immersion, to develop expanded listening and, in the case of 'Guff Gaff Taxi' (2016), to inspire new ideas, to enable creativity and to open a space to listen and learn from others.

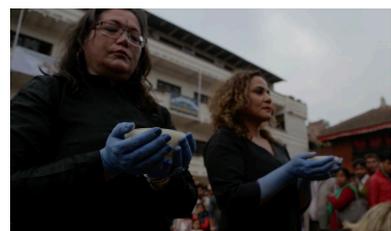
In 'Walking with Milk' (2017), the expanded listening of the performers was found to take shape in combination with knowledge and respect for each other and the shared task, as they silently navigated obstacles and shared perceived threats from police, hawkers, dogs and traffic. Through their joint determination to care for the milk, they built a combined strength, which they described to Fox as being shaped by vulnerability and love.

Fox's work demonstrated the value of playful art installations in creating understanding and closeness within a newly acquainted group. The choice of materials for their ephemeral, sensuous qualities was found to contribute to the exchange, working with ice and ribbon for example during 'Love is a process: passing and cutting' (2017) or committing lines to paper during a bumpy taxi journey.

The ways in which materials developed the practice of 'expanded listening', both between performers and beyond to the audience had a metaphorical dimension. In 'Frozen Unfrozen' (2016), the traces drawn by performers' feet, water droplets and ash map the details of a partially controlled yet ultimately messy exchange. Through the expanded practices of listening facilitated by the changing materiality of the ice the performers enter into an intense 'being with'; in this moment they understand something of each other's fragility and strengths. The act of exchange built an intimacy or a shared experience creating a lasting 'knot' between the performers. The metaphorical exchange also sees the ice relinquish its frozen, solid state, highlighting a shift in perspective.

Through these iterative research performances, Fox developed an informed framework for creative exchange, helping participants to evolve non-verbal communication and instigating an attentive togetherness that breaks down barriers to communication. The research highlighted the rich contribution the combination of drawing and motion can make to thinking and conversation. The method of 'Guff Gaff Taxi' has since been adapted and employed in the form of 'moving meetings' on trains to London as part of an inclusive curatorial team of eight artists with and without learning disabilities (2018) and also on mini-bus 'evaluation journeys' in Vietnam during British Council funded training sessions for 25 [creative hub](#) employees (2020).

Wider insights from the research point to the effectiveness of creative designs to support 'exchange' between diverse groups. These aim to offer a playful, distracting, inspiring, contemplative environment where an honest, dialogic and considered response is invited.



Walking with Milk
Stills from documentary
made during
the performance by Maria
Julia Bollansée with Alice Fox
and collaborators

DISSEMINATION

Performances were developed and staged on location, with documentary recordings developed and disseminated online:

'Taxi Guff Gaff', Kathmandu, August 2016. <https://vimeo.com/182976667>

'Paradox of Praxis 1 #2 (Pushing Together)', Kathmandu, August 2016. <https://vimeo.com/182977362>

'Frozen Unfrozen', Tate Exchange, Tate Gallery, London, 28 September 2016. <https://vimeo.com/185808822>

'Walking with Milk', Kathmandu, April 2017. <https://vimeo.com/219227808>

Fox has featured these research insights in keynote talks at: British Council East Asia Regional Conference, (Liverpool 2016); National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung (October 2017); National Taiwan Museum, Taipei (Nov 2017), Inclusion and Diversity event; The Korean Disability Arts and Culture Centre (Nov 2018) and Manchester Metropolitan University (March 2018). She drew on the research when speaking on '[Shaping Inclusive Museums](#)' at the Rainbow Centre in Singapore on 16 March 2019.

She has also introduced these ideas during training events for arts, health and education workers, commissioned by the British Council in Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, Myanmar and Singapore, as well as incorporating the insight, ideas and concerns of the research into the MA Inclusive Arts curriculum at the University of Brighton.

'Taxi Guff Gaff' was further exhibited at the Kathmandu Triennale 24 March - 9 April 2017, at the invitation of Philippe Van Cauteren, curator of the Triennale and Director of SMAK gallery, Ghent; and funded by Siddhartha Arts Foundation, Nepal.

The art-based encounter 'Love is a Process: Passing and Cutting' resulted in a public performance at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts in Taichung, Taiwan, 2 November 2017. <https://www.britishcouncil.org.tw/en/2017DisabilityAgingSeminar>

'Looking and Walking Away' was performed at the National Gallery in London on 18 May 2018, devised with Dr Christina Bradstreet, courses and events programmer at the National Gallery.

Insights from the performances were included in the Inclusive Arts Festival at the New Taipei City Arts Centre (August 2018), including drawings from 'Taxi Guff Gaff', works that emerged from the art-based encounter workshop 'Taking off: Dreaming of Flying' conducted there and further inclusive arts workshops informed by the research. <https://www.britishcouncil.org.tw/en/2018InclusiveArtsFest>

Fox was artist in residence at the Korean Disability Arts and Culture Centre (KDAC) in Seoul throughout October 2019, where she delivered a public inclusive performance together with a public lecture and inclusive arts training programme for curators and artists in residence at the Seoul Museum of Art. A 106-page book was produced by KDAC to accompany the residency and a documentary film added to the collection of their wider work. <http://www.ieum.or.kr/board/list?boardManagementNo=4&page=4&searchType=&searchWord=&level=1&menuNo=3>

Unlearning
at the Museum

언러닝, 뮤지엄



Korean Disability Arts and Culture Centre
(KDAC) (2019) *Unlearning at the Museum*
(106 pages)

Cover and interior pages 16 and 17
Publication in Korean with full colour
images of Fox's work with KDAC in
October 2019



참여 예술가 소개

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(overleaf)
In-Out
Performance with Korean
Disability Arts and Culture Centre
(KDAC) and Seoul Museum of Art

Exchange

