

# FLOURISHING

## art, participation and the world to come

A LEVERHULME CONFERENCE PRESENTED BY DUNCAN OF JORDANSTONE COLLEGE OF ART

We have come to understand both art education and creativity as forms of industry; as the means by which to generate trained individuals and monetisable artefacts. It is a technocratic approach that understands value in narrow measurable terms that are ranked by metrics employed to determine relative success or failure. But people are diverse and, in contrast to the sleek machinery of industry, they are messy beings many of whose abiding qualities lie beyond the scope of mathematic measurement or monetisation. In times of rapidly accelerating change, these are qualities that become not simply desirable, but essential for survival. The industrial metaphor is increasingly out of step with the urgent needs of the times in which we find ourselves.

An alternative metaphor is that of agriculture. A farmer cannot make a seed grow. All he or she can do is create the conditions under which that seed might flourish. Viewed through this metaphor, creativity must grow from the nature of the individual. Education should not be an instrument of conformity but the husbandry of potential. An agricultural metaphor recognises that such flourishing happens within a wider ecology. An ecology that requires variety and balance. An ecology in which the smallest part can be crucial to the thriving of the whole.

How then can we develop ways in which students may flourish within an art school, an art school within a university and that university find its place within the urban ecology as a whole? How do we value learning that helps each citizen grow and mature beyond the mechanisms of qualification through examination? What value do we place upon educating people to become amateurs, to use their skills and knowledge outside of the marketplace? How do we come to understand education, and indeed the wider world, as a process and not just the accretion of knowledge and things?

These are just some of the questions that will be explored during this one-day conference. Divided into three panel discussions, speakers and audience will explore some of the approaches to, practices of, and outcomes arising from ways of learning and creating that encourage the flourishing of the individual and the institution within the wider ecology of the city.

**Date and Time:** Tuesday 23 October 2018 – 10.00am to 5.00pm

**Venue:** Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, Matthew Building Level 5 theatre, Dundee

**Speakers:** Martin Avila, Development Director, Kinning Park Complex, Glasgow

Dr. Sian Bonnell, Reader, Manchester Metropolitan University

Gair Dunlop, Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Art Practice, DJCAD

Gillian Easson, co-founding Director of Creative Dundee

Ian Milliss, artist and cultural critic, Australia

Sara Nevay, post-graduate researcher, DJCAD

Dr. Tina Röck, philosopher, University of Dundee

Prof. Jonathan Shaw, Director of the Disruptive Media Learning Lab, University of Coventry

Dr. Nick Taylor, Dundee Fellow, DJCAD

**Conference convenor and keynote speaker:** Dr Alasdair Foster, Leverhulme Visiting Professor, DJCAD



# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE – *Flourishing: art, participation and the world to come*

A Leverhulme Conference Presented by Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art – Tuesday 23 October 2018 – 10.00am to 5.00pm

10.00am	Registration and coffee	
10.30am	Introduction [up to 5 minutes] Welcome – University [5 minutes] Welcome – City [up to 5 minutes] Keynote [15 minutes]	Alasdair Foster TBC Cllr John Alexander, Leader of Dundee City Council [video – TBC] Alasdair Foster
11.00am	<b>Session One: Approaches</b> Three speakers [5-10 minutes each], plus panel discussion and questions	Dr. Sian Bonnell, Reader, Manchester Metropolitan University Ian Milliss, artist and cultural critic, Australia [via internet link] Dr. Tina Röck, philosopher, University of Dundee
12.30pm	lunch	
1.30pm	<b>Session Two: Practices</b> Three speakers [5-10 minutes each], plus panel discussion and questions	Gair Dunlop, Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Art Practice, DJCAD, University of Dundee Gillian Easson, co-founding Director of Creative Dundee Sara Nevay, post-graduate researcher, DJCAD, University of Dundee
3.00pm	Tea	
3.15pm	<b>Session Three: Outcomes</b> Three speakers [5-10 minutes each], plus panel discussion and questions	Martin Avila, Development Director, Kinning Park Complex, Glasgow Prof. Jonathan Shaw, Director of the Disruptive Media Learning Lab, University of Coventry Dr. Nick Taylor, Dundee Fellow, DJCAD, University of Dundee
4.45pm	Wind-up	
5.00pm	close	

## PANEL ONE

What are the alternatives to an industrial model for conceiving of creation and learning? Panel One will explore different approaches to creativity and education in terms of individual flourishing and an ecological model that recognises the necessity of diversity.

The panellists are:



### **Dr. Sian Bonnell**

Sian is Reader, Manchester Metropolitan University. She has an art-practice-based interest in what she calls 'wilful amateurism': a blend of play, imagination, dysfunction, irreverence, absurdity, chance and fiction that springs from the experiential rather than notions of expertise. Wilful Amateurism ignores distinctions between the genres in an ad hoc synthesis of space, object and performance aimed at creating fictions within whatever context she finds herself. TRACE, her ongoing, adaptive curation and publishing project, began in 1999.

More on Sian here: [www.art.mmu.ac.uk/profile/sbonnell](http://www.art.mmu.ac.uk/profile/sbonnell)



### **Ian Milliss**

Ian is an artist and cultural critic in Australia who will join us via internet link. Ian Milliss has a left-informed take on the arts and the potential for all forms of work to be approached through the sensibility of art. In a world in rapid change, his approach emphasises the need to adapt: to evolve and to recycle the materials we appropriate in the processes of living; to ensure that our culture, our society and, indeed, we ourselves, remain sustainable.

Interview with Ian Milliss here:

[www.culturaldevelopmentconsulting.com/2013/05/10/7856/](http://www.culturaldevelopmentconsulting.com/2013/05/10/7856/)

A link to second part of the interview at the foot of the first.



### **Dr. Tina Röck**

Tina is a philosopher based in the School of Humanities at the University of Dundee. She is a wide-ranging thinker who is challenging the ontological notion of 'being' as it is often understood as a form of unchanging existence. Through the concepts of process philosophy, she is exploring the implications of understanding being as *becoming*. It is an approach that suggests, at a fundamental level, reality is organically structured and continuously developing. This has led her to a deeper exploration of biophilosophy and philosophy of nature.

More about Tina here:

[www.dundee.ac.uk/humanities/staff/details/tina-rock.php](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/humanities/staff/details/tina-rock.php)

## PANEL TWO

What kind of practices lend themselves to truly collaborative community engagement? Panel Two will explore practical ways in which students (and the university) can engage more richly and meaningfully with initiatives in the city, especially those at a more grass-roots level.

The panellists are:



### **Gair Dunlop**

Gair is Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Art Practice, DJCAD, University of Dundee. He works with high-definition video to create installations that often combine with elements of site-specific practice using digital technologies. Working with scientists, sonic artists and geographers, he investigates a range of contexts from eroding heritage coastlines, the post-war advent of nuclear power and sites of newer technologies such as CERN and ITER. His artworks play with and critique the relationship between scientific discovery, social innovation and propaganda: the experience of 'lived Modernism'.

More about Gair here:

[www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/staff/profile/gair-dunlop-.php#tab-Biography](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/staff/profile/gair-dunlop-.php#tab-Biography)



### **Gillian Easson**

Gillian Easson is co-founding Director of Creative Dundee, which she started as a blog in 2008. In the firm belief that culture and creativity are essential catalysts for positive change, Creative Dundee supports creative talent to develop sustainable practice in and around Dundee. This is achieved through processes of amplification, connection, collaboration and cultivation. Inclusion and accessibility are core to everything Creative Dundee does. In 2018, Creative Review magazine named Gillian one of the top fifty creative leaders from across the UK and Europe.

More about Gillian here: [www.creativedundee.com/team](http://www.creativedundee.com/team)



### **Sara Nevay**

Sara is a post-graduate researcher at DJCAD, University of Dundee. Her research explores a creative practice working inclusively with older adults who may be vulnerable to loneliness. Together, they co-design interactive textiles in order to discover ways of staying socially connected. The project seeks not only to co-create enchanting objects but to also explore how elements of the design process can enhance health and wellbeing by encouraging social interaction, physical activity and greater autonomy.

More about Sara here: [www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/research/research-students/profiles/sara-nevay.php](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/research/research-students/profiles/sara-nevay.php)

## PANEL THREE

How might we assess the benefits of projects designed to stimulate true collaboration between students and the community? Panel Three will explore ways to evaluate projects that ensure sustainability and the flourishing of all those involved; projects which offer the possibility of transformative experience.

The panellists are:



### **Martin Avila**

Martin is Development Director, Kinning Park Complex, Glasgow, an independent multi-use centre run by the community. Martin works on the centre's strategic direction, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds to share the centre's spaces and values. A strong believer that communities improve when they're given opportunities and support, Martin has dedicated his career to the third sector. He is also co-founder of the volunteering charity Xchange Scotland and External Relations Committee Coordinator of the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations.

More about Kinning Park Complex here: [www.kinningparkcomplex.org](http://www.kinningparkcomplex.org)



### **Prof. Jonathan Shaw**

Jonathan is the co-founder and Director of the Disruptive Media Learning Lab, University of Coventry. He has been an active interdisciplinary practitioner and academic leader within Higher Education for nearly twenty years. Over the past ten years he has been instrumental in driving innovation within curricula design and envisioning next-generation learning spaces. This work includes expanded ways of measuring and communicating attainment, building a richly integrated picture of an individual's lifelong learning.

More about Jonathan here:

<https://pureportal.coventry.ac.uk/en/persons/jonathan-shaw>



### **Dr. Nick Taylor**

Nick is Dundee Fellow, DJCAD, University of Dundee. He specialises in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and Interactive Design with a focus on technologies that support communities and civic engagement. His work spans DIY and making, citizen science, ubiquitous computing for civic engagement, and public spaces as sites for intervention. The emphasis is on innovative participatory methods with a focus on sustainability and legacy. Underpinning all of this research is a desire to empower citizens to have a positive impact on their environment.

More about Nick here:

[www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/staff/profile/nick-taylor.php](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/djcad/staff/profile/nick-taylor.php)