

AUTO ITALIA SOUTH EAST – FROM GRADUATE TO REVENUE CLIENT: A JOURNEY

INTRODUCTION

THERE is no one defining model for artists' workspaces. From owned, permanent buildings to a more peripatetic approach to meeting the needs of the artist group; from lively public engagement programmes to those that focus more on the production of art; from a shifting population of tenants to a small, unchanging group of founding individuals, the ambitions and needs of NFASP members is nearly as diverse as the membership itself.

In this case study we look at a model that has production and collaboration at its core, occupying buildings on a temporary basis as the needs of their practice demand to produce, show and discuss work. With some early support from NFASP Auto Italia South East has developed from being a group of recent graduates with a mission to challenge existing models of practice to one of the newest of the Arts Council England's regularly funded organisations.

AUTO ITALIA SOUTH EAST

AUTO ITALIA SOUTH EAST is an artist-run organisation that commissions and produces new work. Through collaboration with a growing group of artists it provides a framework for developing alternative approaches to practice and exhibition formats that include opportunities for participation and discussion.

This case study looks at their journey from finding their first project space to becoming revenue funded clients of Arts Council England and a Community Interest Company, working towards charitable status. They have no permanent home, taking on spaces to develop projects and generate income, offering an interesting model for artists considering setting up studio spaces.

IT'S LIKE STARING SOMEONE OUT WHO ISN'T LOOKING AT YOU



CASE STUDY: AUTO ITALIA SOUTH EAST

FIRST STEPS

THEY first encountered NFASP at it's annual conference where they were invited to present the history and background of setting up their space.

After the initial six months was up the landlord, a housing association – based in South East London, told them that their building was about to be developed but that another one was available in Glengall Road, where they

were able to spend three years building the core of their programme.

In 2011 they moved to a vast building in The Old Kent Road which, in hindsight, they realised was probably too big, but succeeded in producing projects which dealt with the scale of the space. At the time of writing they are currently homeless but busy with projects.

FINANCE

THE success of Auto-Italia South East appears to be their collaborative approach to working with other artists and partners. From their initial conversation with a housing association they have been able to build up a good working relationship, which means that they are able to source other buildings as they need them.

Their relationship with Arts Council England has also grown. From the early days of project funding (2008), to their current status as NPO clients with three year funding from ACE guaranteed. Not all of their early applications for funding were successful but this was seen as part of a process and the applications were re-worked and re-submitted. They also had a good relationship with one ACE officer and it helped to have a point of contact who understood what they were trying to achieve.

As the projects grew in scale, so the momentum built to the point where they were offered £50,000 per annum by ACE to cover their core costs. However, this agreement means that they cannot apply for lottery funding, therefore that they must still fundraise for projects and this is proving a challenge at a time when many others are chasing after the same pots of funding.



WE HAVE OUR OWN CONCEPT OF TIME AND MOTION

BACKGROUND

FOUNDED in 2007, Auto Italia South East is co-run by three artists and has been working out of temporary donated buildings in south east London, producing projects on site and also for other project spaces and institutions. Recent projects include Auto Italia LIVE: Double Dip Concession, ICA, London, and It's Like Staring Someone Out Who's Not Even Looking At You, Tate, part of Barbara Hammer's Fearless Frame, Tate Modern.

The founding members were Kate Cooper, Amanda Dennis and Rachel Pimm, who met while they were at art school in London. The project is currently run by artists Kate Cooper and Marianne Forrest

They were offered a building in Peckham for six months where they showed their work. At the time Kate Cooper says, "We didn't know we were setting up an artists' run initiative".

As they were starting out, in 2007, there didn't seem to be much going on in Peckham and they felt quite isolated. But by the same token there wasn't any pressure to do anything, so they did shows, invited friends to openings and things snowballed from there.

CURRENT ACTIVITY AND FUTURE

PLANS/DEVELOPMENT

AUTO-ITALIA is a work in progress, developing new models for working, driven by the projects rather than buildings. The driver is collaboration, "I wish there was more space [in the UK] for artists to collaborate", Kate Cooper says. So while studio rents can yield some income for the programme, it is the projects and the commissioning that come first. Auto-Italia are interested in the idea of the shared space – a site of production, meetings, screenings and events; a focus to bring people together.

For many artists running a space can be time consuming and sometimes detrimental to their own art practice, but Kate Cooper insists that the collaborative nature of Auto-Italia (they meet other artists through their networks, who are then invited to work with them), feeds into her own work. She says, "What we do is a big part of my practice and the way I work is reflected in the way I put the programme together."

They have recently undertaken a project with the ICA (see link below) and are working towards a project at Artissima, Italy. In tandem with this they are developing a pilot artists' associate programme, with the intention of providing resources, speakers and mentors and they are working towards establishing Auto- Italia as an organisation with charitable status, to help them secure funding from a wider pool of funding organisations.

ENTRANCE & UNDERGROUND: THE SEQUEL

IN October 2009 Auto Italia hosted a temporary programme of performances, events, discussions and presentations from on-going projects by emerging artists.

Entrance & Underground: The Sequel was a playful interrogation of the notion of 'theatricality' in contemporary art exhibitions, and a revisitation, a collaboration which took place at the Royal College of Art in March 2009. This project invited three London-based artist run spaces (Auto Italia South East, Parade, Centre of The Centre of the Universe) to contribute to the annual Royal College of Art, Curating Contemporary Art degree show.

With film screenings and performances, including one devised by artist Nazareno Crea. Which involved a motocross rider and a stage full of glitter, accompanied by a soprano from The Royal College of Music. This was mashed together with German nosebleed techno, the project examined the original Entrance & Underground project, curated by Dean Kissick.



ENTRANCE AND UNDERGROUND: THE SEQUEL

"I wish there was more space (in the UK) for artists to collaborate"

Kate Cooper

WE HAVE OUR OWN CONCEPT OF TIME AND MOTION

IN August 2011 Auto Italia in collaboration with Federico Campagna, Huw Lemmey, Michael Oswell and Charlie Woolley presented *We have our own concept of Time and Motion*: a four day event devoted to the idea and practice of self-organisation.

We have our own idea of Time and Motion comes from a network of artists who have formed around Auto Italia. It was a product of artists finding affinity with each others' projects, ideas and aspirations. Drawing on the intangible expertise, knowledge and network, which Auto Italia is a part of, it produced new information to develop a wider narrative for the future of grass-roots projects and artist-led organisations.

Featuring a temporary bookshop run by the new cooperative organisation Book Bloc, archival material selected by participating artists and commissioned furniture by Charlie Woolley, the exhibition space became a base for the production of new work and ideas. Through a series of events this project investigated pre-conceived ideas of self-organisation and the role of gender politics within this.

Through workshops, panel discussions and daily podcasts the project examined models of production especially from the position of an artist-run space, how this fits within a neo-liberal framework and is potentially complicit in the growing precarity of all labour. The project title references the fourth issue of the publication *Class War*, which controversially introduced Autonomist ideas to the London anarchist scene in the mid 1980s.



WE HAVE OUR OWN CONCEPT OF TIME AND MOTION

TOP TIPS

- Build good relationships
- Find people who understand the value of what you do

USEFUL LINKS

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www.autoitaliasoutheast.org
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1
<http://www.ica.org.uk/16697/Artistrun-spaces-London/autoitalia.html>

2
<http://autoitaliasoutheast.org/projects/its-like-staring-at-someone-who-isnt-looking-at-you/>

IT'S LIKE STARING SOMEONE OUT WHO ISN'T LOOKING AT YOU

THIS performative screening considers what a feminist moving image practice might mean to artists working today. Departing from a wide range of references and source material, the artists consider 'feminist' or 'women's' work within theatre, film and fashion. Layering archival material with live performance from audience members, the artists map out a new territory for women within the mainstream. This screening explores new forms of agency that the power relationships which govern both the work of women artists and also the creation of the images of women opens up. It introduces the figure of the young girl as subjected to dominant forces yet simultaneously empowered by this supposedly marginalised position.

This screening was commissioned and produced by Auto Italia South East and initially performed in December 2011 at Bodies Assembling. Produced through a collaboration between Auto Italia and the women's film distributor Cinenova, Bodies Assembling saw a range of contemporary responses to feminist and women's film and video. The project brought together the practice and ideas which are represented in the films and videos distributed by Cinenova, the individuals and organisations presenting the screenings. Through taking Auto Italia as an active model in the dual creation of both new work and also the context in which that work is distributed, Bodies Assembling became a forum to consider contemporary forms of distribution and self-representation.

This case study is available in a range of formats from nfasp. For more information on nfasp and examples of other case studies visit <http://www.nfasp.org.uk> ask@nfasp.org.uk

