



Heddon, D. (2020) Professional development for live artists: doing it yourself. *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 11(2), pp. 145-161. (doi: [10.1080/19443927.2020.1740313](https://doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2020.1740313)).

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Deposited on: 09 March 2020

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Professional Development for Live Artists: Doing it Yourself

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Abstract

In 2002, the Live Art Development Agency, in partnership with the Live Art Advisory Network, initiated a London-based pilot project entitled DIY. Conceived at the outset as a professional development scheme run by and for artists, six artist-led projects were selected, with spaces taken up by 51 participants. By 2019, there had been 249 DIY projects led by some 250 artists, in partnership with 75 organisations, and supporting more than 2,700 participants. Given its longevity, it is surprising that DIY has not been the focus of a case study for thinking through the relationship of (live) art and professional development. This article, combining historical review of the scheme with examples of DIY projects and pedagogical analysis, aims to address that oversight. It asks what 'Professional Development' looks like and does in the space of live art. It argues that DIY reimagines professional development as being 'like' live art, and proposes DIY as a model of agential pedagogy, with artists taking the lead in identifying, defining and addressing their professional development needs.

I've learnt more in these three days than in the past six months.
(Casper Below, DIY participant, Live Art Development Agency, *DIY: 2007 – Call for Proposals*)¹

In 2002, the Live Art Development Agency (LADA), in partnership with the Live Art Advisory Network (LAAN), initiated a London-based pilot project entitled DIY.² Conceived at the outset as a professional development scheme run by and for artists, six artist-led projects were selected, with spaces taken up by 51 participants. In 2019, LADA, in partnership with 22 organisations across the UK, supported 23 DIY projects and offered places to some 270 participants. Since the 2002 pilot, there have been 249 DIY projects led by some 250 artists supporting more than 2,700 participants. Given its longevity, it is surprising that DIY has not been the focus of a case study for thinking through the relationship of (live) art and professional development. This article, combining historical review with examples of DIY projects and pedagogical analysis, aims to address that oversight. It asks what 'Professional Development' looks like and does in the space of live art and proposes DIY as a model of agential pedagogy, with artists taking the lead in identifying, defining and addressing their professional development needs.

Live Art and Professional Development: An Oxymoron?

As well as a truly inspiring experience I was really impressed in terms of professional development. It really is rare to feel such support, motivation and momentum at such a personal, internal level. Generally I find professional development to be a buzz word

¹ The documentation of DIY is published on the Live Art Development Agency's website. All citations from artists and participants are from published material. The pilot DIY in 2002 was documented through extracts from artist and participant feedback, accompanied by a relatively short report. For DIY 2 (2004), a 22-page report was made available in print and PDF format - a practice that was to continue to DIY 10 (2013), which issued a 99-page report. From 2014 onwards, the print and PDF reports were discontinued, and all documentation became online. Project leads were invited to respond to a series of questions and submit ten images.

² In 2002, LAAN was a consortium of Artsadmin, LADA and New Work Network, drawing together the expertise from each organisation to support professional development of artists. Artsadmin, founded in 1979, is a producing organisation that supports artists to make and tour interdisciplinary work and runs an Artists' Development scheme which offers advice, information, training and bursaries. See <https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/>. LADA, founded in 1999, supports artists through its curatorial and research projects, commissioned publications, discussions, workshops, library resources and bursaries. See <https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/>. New Work Network was an artist-led organisation which, for 15 years, supported the development of new work across performance, live art and interdisciplinary practice and also functioned as an advocacy organisation. It ceased operating in October 2012. LAAN continues as a partnership between Artsadmin and LADA.

or a tangent to where one should really be focusing but this was real, fulfilling and life changing for the good. (James Steventon, DIY participant, LADA, *DIY: 2011 – Call for Proposals*)

The conjoining of 'Live Art' with 'Professional Development' seems paradoxical. LADA, founded in 1999 and the UK's most established and influential organisation in the sector, informs visitors to its website that live art is, amongst other things, a creative space, a research engine, a cultural strategy, a framing device, a generative force and a frontline of enquiries. It disrupts borders, breaks rules, defies traditions, resists definitions, asks awkward questions and activates audiences (LADA, *What is Live Art*).

The reiterated disruptive potential of live art, its radicality and criticality, sits awkwardly next to dominant conceptualisations of 'Professional Development' which conjure, by contrast, notions of normative and regulatory standards of competency developed within and serving bureaucratic working contexts. Professional development activity is framed as part of a wider neo-liberal economic agenda which seeks to maximise capacity, efficiency and productivity of workers. Within this paradigm, knowledge is understood as a resource and a commodity. Educational scholar Ann Webster-Wright (2009, p. 716) offers a useful framing of the context of Professional Development, or in her terms Continuing Professional Learning (CPL):

In what has been called a knowledge economy with economic rationalist drivers, employees as 'human capital' are key resources of an organization (Garrick & Clegg, 2000; Ingham, 2006; OECD, 1998a). Within this discourse, the value of CPL to an organization is seen in terms of the professional's ability to apply knowledge to produce outcomes contributing to the organizational goals.

The employer sets the professional development agenda, determining what activity is valuable, justifiable and legitimate. This viewing of knowledge as a commodity belongs to an objectivist epistemology, presenting knowledge as something which can be 'produced, managed, or transferred' (p. 715) and 'topped-up' (p. 713), positioning the professional as a passive recipient rather than active co-producer. The knowledge-transfer perspective presumes a deficit and hierarchical model of knowledge acquisition:

professionals are in need of 'training' or 'developing' through knowledge being 'delivered' to them in courses. Not only does this approach tend to imply a transmission model of teaching and learning, but it also moves the emphasis from the 'knowledge-

deficient' professional to the 'knowledge-possessing' provider (p. 713).

The deficit model of professional development 'is not congruent with a notion of professionals as engaged, agentic individuals, capable of self-directed learning' (p. 724). It is also aligned with the 'update perspective' which 'stresses the obsolescence of present knowledge' and which 'reinforces the view of learning as "filling up" a reservoir of knowledge' (p. 712) and typically understands competency as stage-based progression, moving in a linear fashion from novice to expert and in the process reinforcing hierarchies of expertise (p. 718).

Research on professional development most often focuses on the regulated professions, such as teaching and nursing. Professional development as a term and practice does have application in the arts sector, even if it has received little critical attention to date. Its deployment in this context is not without contention and debate. Polly Staple and Laura Wilson (2015, p.5), in their forward to *Mapping Artists' Professional Development Programmes in the UK: Knowledge and Skills*, commissioned by Chisenhale Gallery, note:

In discussion with artists and organisational representatives, it became clear that professional development is a contentious term. What does it mean to professionalise an artist? Is the concept of 'professionalisation' not at odds with the essence of artistic production?

The Arts Council of Wales' publication (2018), *Arts Grants for Creative Professionals: Professional Development*, is indicative of current arts-based professional development discourse. The purpose of this scheme is 'To enable creative professionals to attend training, enhance their creative practice and invest in the skills that will help them to build a sustainable career in Wales.' It aims to support artists becoming 'better skilled, more sustainable and more resilient'. While reference is made to innovative and imaginative ways that this might be done, examples include 'attending an industry-recognised training course, attending a master-class [*sic*], participating in an action learning set, or taking up coaching, mentoring or creative apprenticeship opportunities'. Sustainability refers predominantly to 'strengthening the business side of your practice'. Creative Scotland's professional development scheme (Creative Scotland, 2014), which ran from 2011-2014, offered a similar model, with proposed development activity including attendance at conferences, workshops, masterclasses and trade fairs, a structured programme of technical skills development, residencies, mentoring and shadowing opportunities and participation in international networks. The art-sector discourse of professional development is not significantly different to that of other

sectors; it also participates in perpetuating wider normative notions of what professional development is and who and what it is for.

LADA and LAAN's placing of 'Live Art' in close proximity to 'Professional Development' courted the tension articulated above between artistic practice and its professionalisation (and instrumentalisation and marketisation). Aaron Wright (2014, p. 73), former Programmes Manager with LADA, and pivotal to the development of DIY into a national scheme, noted, 'As with most things, DIY started life with the seed of an idea, in this case, an interest in the apparent oxymoron of "training" for artists'.³ Wright's parenthetical example - '(healthy and safety [training] anyone?)' - though no doubt presented with tongue firmly in cheek, signals something of the low bar of sectoral expectations around training opportunities for artists. The resolution of this apparent tension between artistic practice and training, as I shall show, was not to deny the need for or value of professional development but to reimagine professional development as like live art or, more radically, as live art. That is, in the DIY model, professional development may well be conceptualised as a creative space, a research engine, a cultural strategy, a framing device, a generative force and a frontline of enquiries. DIY offers a reimagining of professional development that gives agency to live artists by asking: what would you do to/in the conceptual space of Professional Development?

DIY 1: Outlandish, adventurous, unique, creative, critical and unconventional

I personally loved the diverting and not-knowing - I couldn't have approached it any other way - too unsure and ambivalent about my place in all this stuff. It is all resonating and slotting into things but won't settle and that's a good thing - its stuff not to be 'parked' but worried at or over or about - fretted on. (Participant in Gillie Kleiman's *Criticism is Community*, LADA, *DIY 11 Documentation*)

Lois Keidan (2019), Director of LADA, recalls that 'at the beginning of the new millennium, the Arts Council discovered professional development', a positive and significant step 'because it was suddenly finding funding for artists rather than art'. The Arts Council's conception of professional development at that time, according to Keidan, was very much the 'deficit model' noted above; those who produced or administered the arts telling artists what to do. LADA and LAAN responded to a call by Arts Council England's London office to support the professional development of artists and secured the funding for DIY 1 (2002), DIY 2 (2004) and DIY 3 (2005).³ Their take on professional

³ The Network was a partner in Creative Capital, one of ten consortia in the national Creative People pilot, which aimed to help artists to identify, prioritise and implement professional development activities.

development, in distinction to that of the Arts Council, was 'that the people who know most about their professional development needs are artists, so rather than us sitting behind our desks telling artists how to develop their practice, let's put a call out to artists and ask "what are your professional development needs, or rather, what kinds of things would you want to look at doing in collaboration with other artists?"' (Keidan, 2019).⁴

In 2002, the invitation for proposals for DIY 1 was issued:

DIY offers artists working in Live Art the chance to conceive and run professional development projects for other artists.

Most professional development schemes tend to be developed by 'arts professionals' for artists. There is sometimes a perception that what results is professional development that is formulaic and, more importantly, not geared to the eclectic and often unusual needs of artists whose practices are grounded in challenging and unconventional approaches, forms and concepts.

We want to hear from you if you have an idea for an exciting, innovative and idiosyncratic Live Art professional development project that offers something different to the normal workshops, masterclasses, residencies, exchanges, etc. (LADA, *DIY: 2002- Call for Proposals*)

This first call, with its invitation to artists to 'conceive and run professional development projects for other artists' staged an early intervention in the predominant discourse of professional development. It explicitly acknowledged at the outset the expertise of artists; artists know what they need, can direct and manage their own learning, and can support the learning of others through their situated knowledge. Professional development is presented in this first invitation as related to live art practice, engaging with ideas, questions and concepts and rooted in process and practice - experimentation and exploration - rather than settled product.

We are seeking proposals from artists for adventurous and possibly outlandish projects that are grounded in an awareness of the issues

⁴ The pilot DIY intersected with a live art sectoral report published by LADA the preceding year, *Focus Live Art - Report and Findings* (2001). This report drew on deliberations of the sustainability of the sector by artists, promoters and funders. One of four key challenges identified was 'Artistic development - process and product', which highlighted priorities including 'Support artists in the research, development and ongoing process of their practices in equal measure to the generation and placement of new work'. The report repeatedly noted the need for access to a range of resources and ongoing support, in different forms, throughout an artist's career.

impacting on artists' practices and are aimed at enhancing the range of approaches available to practitioners. The development of a Live Art practice is not so much about skills and techniques (although these are of course inherent in the work) but about ideas and possibilities. We are therefore not seeking proposals for training programmes in any conventional sense but more illustrations and illuminations of how to approach and address ideas. (LADA, *DIY: 2002- Call for Proposals*)

If the 'content' of live art professional development opportunities sought to challenge the fixed parameters of training and reposition it as creative and imaginative pursuit in its own right, the process of application presumed the professionalism of live artists. Applicants to DIY were invited to submit a proposal of up to three sides of A4, which would include a project description, artistic rationale, proposed methodology, likely participants, imagined outcomes and benefits for participants, a schedule, budget and short biography. The total budget available for the pilot DIY was £4000 and the Network partners anticipated making four to six awards of between £500 to £1000. Artists were expected to be paid for the time they contributed. As DIY was funded by Arts Council England (London), the projects needed to be held in London or mostly benefit London-based artists.

The call was equally transparent about the review process: a selection panel of representatives from Artsadmin, LADA and New Work Network would consider the applications and prioritise those that best met the published criteria, which included relevance to the aims of the DIY initiative and to live art practice, clarity of artistic direction and vision, degree to which the proposal would contribute to the professional development of artists, and its viability. Additionally, there was commitment to supporting a range of forms which together offered a coherent DIY programme.

Six DIY projects were selected for the pilot year: Barby Asante's *Journey into the Suburbs*, Leslie Hill and Helen Paris's *Guerilla Retreat*, Richard Dedomenici's *The Perfect Point of Percy Passage*, Richard Layzell's *Deprivation and Overload*, Howard Matthew's *Studio Sessions* and Joshua Sofaer and Duckie's *Swap Shop Work Shop*. These inaugural DIY projects demonstrated at the outset the diversity of approaches possible within a framework of professional development by and for artists. Asante took participating artists into the suburbs of London over the course of two Saturday mornings to explore their 'inner Suburbanite'. Richard Dedomenici's project, also site-responsive, offered participants a 'day-long exploration of the Tottenham Court Road/Charing Cross corridor of London', with the guided tour promoting 'new ways of interpreting and navigating the built environment'. By contrast, Leslie Hill and Helen Paris's *Guerilla Retreat* was more skills-based, giving participants the

space to develop and get feedback on ideas and to hone self-identified practical skills, including software expertise. *Deprivation and Overload*, hosted by Richard Layzell, took place over three days, with the first spent in silence, the second entirely verbal and drawing on the experiences of invited guests from other sectors to explore the place of live art in those, and the final day dedicated to synthesis and individual mentoring. Howard Matthew's *Studio Sessions*, for just five participants, invited each to take the group to a non-art studio. The openness of this project speaks to the messiness of collaborative and collective knowledge-making, in contrast to the 'container' model of knowledge transfer noted above. *Studio Sessions* 'does not have a set agenda and will not attempt to define what constitutes a Live Art studio practice. However, it will address and try to frame some appropriate questions to this discursive practice'. The final project of the pilot, led by Joshua Sofaer and Duckie was a 'one-off experimental ideas-lab and performance making workshop' involving 'sharing practical skills, personal objects, stories, and a few of our favourite things' (LADA, *DIY: 2002 – Call for Participants*).

This first DIY acknowledged that professional development needs might shift throughout an artist's career, risking aligning the model with the 'stage-based progression' noted above. However, in a framework of shared learning through exploration, presumptions of hierarchy based on levels of competency and expertise perhaps give way to affinities of experience. Asante's invitation was to emergent live art practitioners, Matthews' was directed at artists who had 'produced at least three pieces of funded or supported work and/or are able to demonstrate and articulate their practice in a manner which makes them suitable for a project of this nature' and Sofaer and Duckie's was for a group of ten invited solo artists (*ibid.*).

The call for participants in the first DIY projects emphasised DIY as a peer-led professional development of practice:

DIY invites artists working in Live Art to take part in a unique series of short training and professional development projects conceived and run BY artists FOR artists.

[...] DIY aims to support artists in the continuing development of their practice by offering a framework to imagine new possibilities and explore new ways of working. (*Ibid.*)

The six projects demonstrated that DIY could function as a catalyst for diverse approaches to 'professional development', in terms of focus, methodology, site, scale, duration and intended participants. Some projects were research-led, conceptual and discursive, others skills-based, and some offered models of mentoring. All brought together, in distinctive ways, a community of learner-practitioners and evidenced the potential for developing artist-led networks.

DIY Professional Development

The DIY scheme creates a culture of reciprocity, generosity and respect. Artists need one another, now more than ever. I learn by teaching and find inspiration in facilitating growth. (Stacy Makishi, DIY lead artist, LADA, *DIY: 2016 – Documentation*)

The DIY has certainly taught me to have confidence to think wild and big, to be untamed and optimistic [...]. It also reminded me how great it can be to work with other artists and how giving they can be of their time for projects that they support, and that is of tremendous value. (Angela Bartram, DIY lead artist, *ibid.*)

The name given to this professional development scheme for live artists, DIY, is not incidental. DIY - Do It Yourself - is intended to signal that DIY is conceived and delivered 'BY artists FOR artists', a tagline that has appeared on the DIY webpages since the 2002 pilot. At the turn of the millennium, DIY as a concept and practice gained traction in the UK through the popular appeal of home improvement television shows, such as *DIY SOS* and *Changing Rooms*. For LADA, though, the choice of DIY as a name was intended to attach it to a more radical countercultural history and practice, one anchored in taking action; in doing something for oneself rather than waiting for something to be done for or to you (McKay, 1998, p.4; Ratto and Boler, 2014, p. 18).

An early exemplar of DIY culture was the alternative schooling movement of the 1960s, proposed by David Gauntlett (2018, p. 11) as 'literally a DIY approach to education', which placed the learner at the centre of the experience, supporting them 'to follow their own interests and explore the world in whatever way they choose'. DIY professional development follows this trajectory, as a form of DIY pedagogy. Andrew Gibbons and Emit Snake-Beings' recent essay (2018, p. 29), which explores the idea of DIY pedagogy as a way to respond to an uncertain future, draws useful connections between DIY culture and DIY education.

DIY culture, as an ethos, is concerned with exploring improvised ways of doing things, has a rich history of working outside of centralised structures of knowledge: as a method of alternative social and technological organisation which is not based on a centralised model; offering alternatives to metanarratives of socio-technological progress.

One of the criticisms of DIY as a term (Ratto and Boler p.8, p. 12) is that the emphasis placed on 'doing it yourself' risks aligning it with liberal individualism, with the concept of self-reliance continuing to privilege the individual over the collective. As the examples from the DIY pilot suggest, the DIY professional development scheme might more accurately be termed DIT, DIO or DIWO - do-it-together, do-it-ourselves, or do it with

others (Ratto and Boler, p. 8; Lowndes, 2016, p. xiv; Baker, 2014, p. 31). Learning is personalised, self-realised and self-actualised - free from prescription - but it takes place within a collective of learners (Lowndes, p. 264). The conceptualisation of 'professional development' as a process of collaborative exploration and discovery resists the presumption of knowledge as something already determined, to be passed on from the one who knows to the one who seeks to know. In the first DIY, lead artists were referred to as hosts, rather than leaders or facilitators and their feedback confirms they are learners too:

DIY was a great opportunity to take my teaching / training / facilitating ideas further than usual, to cover new ground. (Richard Layzell, *ibid.*)

I personally found my experience of being a facilitator of my own project very empowering. I have been involved in workshops, training and teaching, which more often than not required me to work from a brief designed by someone else. Journey into the Suburbs was instigated by me, funded by organisations that supported my ideas and lastly, I was responsible for the money, workshops and training. (Barby Asante, *ibid.*)

The deficit model is replaced by one which is emergent. The embrace of exploration and experimentation in, through and as professional development makes for a pedagogy very much aligned to the liveness of live art, what we might call then a *lively pedagogy*. I am reminded of bell hooks' (1994, pp. 7-8) commitment to a pedagogy of excitement rather than boredom. hooks credits the generation of excitement to an interest in and attentiveness to one another. DIY is a relational and convivial pedagogy, fostering active participation in place of passive consumption:

I got so much out of the retreat - it was a real booster creatively. The spirit of sharing amongst the group was a powerful tonic, and made it a really comfortable environment in which to ask questions and discuss ideas without feeling foolish. (Clare Thornton, DIY participant, LADA, *DIY: 2002 – Some Extracts from the artist's and participant's reports*)

LADA and the Network's review of the pilot DIY scheme (LADA, *DIY: 2002*) emphasised the benefits of a professional development programme that was artist-led. DIY

- empowered artists by allowing them to manage their own professional development.
- enabled artists to develop creative approaches directly relevant to the needs of their practice.

- encouraged artists to perceive their artistic output and professional development as inter-related and mutually beneficial components of a 'complete' practice.
- facilitated networking between like-minded artists.⁵

The provision of training by artists for artists presumes and supports a community of learners and a learning community. Refusing the deficit discourse, the report positions artists as highly capable professionals, best placed to identify their own needs and to shape their own learning, supported by and supporting other artists and engendering relationships of reciprocity.

Marking the shifts

I have had an irreplaceable injection of courage and spirit. I have made some long-lasting connections with other artists. The week propelled me forward within my own research like nothing else could have. (Participant, *Unfunky UFO, LADA, DIY: 2016 – Documentation*)

DIY has been an almost annual feature in live art development since the pilot in 2002 (the exceptions being 2003 and 2006). Space prohibits attending to all 16 DIY editions but a sweep across them allows me to track significant changes in the scheme.

DIY 4 (2007) evidenced a radical extension to the reach of DIY, increasing from the seven projects supported in DIY 3 (2005) to 15. For the first time these took place across England and in collaboration with other organisations, including Nuffield Theatre/LANWest, Fierce Festival, Colchester Arts Centre, Brighton Fringe Arts Production and Dance4. Partner organisations provided the funding for projects allowing the scheme to gain significant impact (Keidan, 2019). DIY 4 was also supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

DIY remained consistent between 2007 and 2012, supporting between nine and 15 projects and collaborating with numerous partners. DIY 6 (2009) signalled an important initiative - the offering of a partner's 'brief'. Environmental art and campaigning organisation, Platform, sought to support two projects which would 'address and revolve around the issue of climate change and climate justice' (LADA, *DIY: 2009 – Call for Proposals*). From 2010 onwards, partners' briefs became normative

⁵ The documentation from DIY 1 to 11 included a short evaluation, outlining the benefits of DIY and suggestions for future development. These remained largely consistent across the years, with just one additional benefit added to the list in 2005: DIY 'inspires artists to take risks and think differently'. Suggestions for development included inclusion of travel budgets, higher-profile project evaluations, and more funding for lead artists.

practice, offered alongside open calls. DIY 7 saw the reach of the scheme extend to Scotland, in collaboration with Forest Fringe. DIY 10 (2013), marked another significant shift in scale, with 23 projects supported by 21 partners including, in Wales, Chapter Arts Centre and National Theatre Wales. Create, in Ireland, offered two bursaries to support Irish artists taking part in the projects. By 2013, then, all nations of the UK had a stake in DIY. This scale has been sustained. Keidan (2019) advises that an important feature of DIY is that it does not offer a one-off workshop, but 'a critical mass of workshops happening around the same time' and, I would add, across the country.

While DIY projects are mostly funded by partner organisations, LADA has been proactive in seeking additional funding, indicating how important this strand of activity is to its portfolio. As noted, DIY has been supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. DIY 12 (2015) was co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union as part of the Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme; funding for each DIY project was increased to £1500, an uplift of 50%. From DIY 14 (2017) onwards, projects have received £1600, with the additional £100 specifically intended to help cover participants' expenses. (As far as possible, there is no fee for participation.) DIY 14 was supported by Jerwood Charitable Foundation, which funded DIY+, an initiative facilitating more ambitious DIY projects by providing a budget of £4000 each. Three DIY+ projects were commissioned: one, led by Martin O'Brien, took a small group of participants to Transylvania; another, led by USA-based artist Sheree Rose, focused on training in sadomasochistic methodologies; the third, led by Toni Lewis & Demi Nandhra, brought together arts professionals who identified as women of colour and cisgendered white men of any sexual orientation to stage a dialogue between them. Jerwood funding also supported DIY Progression, allowing artists to develop ideas that came out of their DIY workshops. Finally, the funding underwrote the partnership contribution of small artist-led organisations, ensuring they could participate. Such underwriting means that DIY directly supports the ecology of live art in the UK.

Arts Council England's 'Ambition for Excellence' programme has provided funding for the past three DIYs as part of LADA's contribution to Live Art UK's Diverse Actions initiative. This has supported three DIYs each year led by artists of colour.⁶ Projects have included Tara Fatehi Irani's *Her Eyes Under the Bridge* (LADA, *DIY: 2017 – Tara Fatehi Irani*), which explored 'how personal documents and performance can animate each other within a specific context of travelling and migration', and Nwando Ebizie's *Afro Diasporic Ritual as Afrofuturist Technology*, which explored 'neuro-mythology, Haitian Vodou dance practice, atypical perception,

⁶ Diverse Actions champions 'culturally diverse (BME: Black and Minority Ethnic) ambition, excellence and talent in Live Art' (LADA, *Diverse Actions*).

sensory deprivation and immersion for neurodiverse artists of colour' (LADA, *DIY: 2018 – Nwando Ebizie*).

Partnerships with diverse organisations across the UK have remained vibrant since initiated in 2007. Approximately 75 collaborators have been engaged, ranging from the Scottish Sculpture Workshop in Aberdeenshire to Tate Liverpool, Norwich Arts Centre and Jersey Arts Trust. All partners participate in the review and selection process of DIY proposals. Importantly, DIY offers organisations unfamiliar with live art a relatively low-risk gateway into developing their knowledge, experience and networks, which in turn has led to them supporting or commissioning live art, enhancing opportunities (Keidan, 2019). A key example of this was Joshua Sofaer's project, *Indecent Proposal* (DIY 7, 2010). This provided six mid-career artists, including Sofaer, the opportunity to develop bespoke proposals for the Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP). The aim was to build skills and confidence in the formulation and presentation of pitching. The training included a site visit, development of individual ideas with the group of artists and individual feedback from YSP's curatorial team. Though YSP was neither expected nor required to take forward any of the proposals, some were in fact commissioned, including *MAKE* by Florence Peake (2012) and *Carl An(t)dre* (2013) by Jordan McKenzie. Participant Hester Reeve also took up a two-year YSP-residency.

To date, approximately 250 artists have run DIY projects. The vast majority have delivered just one project, though some 30 artists have run more than one, and a few have delivered four (Katie Etheridge and Simon Persighetti, Richard Layzell, Geraldine Pilgrim, and Joshua Sofaer). Stacy Makishi has led seven. Emerging artists who participated in DIY projects have gone on to lead them, and many experienced artists who have led DIYs have, and continue to be, participants in other DIYs. DIYs are led by emerging as well as established artists (challenging teleological notions of expertise).

The annual open invitation for DIY proposals means that the diverse knowledges, questions, concerns, approaches, ideas and practices of a huge range of artists are shared with other artists, helping ensure the DIY offer remains relevant to artists' needs. The DIY professional development portfolio is eclectic and unruly, ranging from stargazing, urban orienteering, digger racing, wrestling and lap dancing to more ostensibly 'industry', 'craft' and 'technology'-focused skills development including evaluating, soldering and documenting. The latter are delivered with a live art sensibility of disrupting and questioning. For example, Lucy Kimbell's *Free Evaluation Service* (DIY 2, 2004), held in Oxford University's Said Business School, provided six participants with a free, one-to-one evaluation of their practice, offering insights into the languages and processes of evaluation.

The radical openness of the invitation for proposals and its explicit solicitation of the unusual and idiosyncratic allows artists to determine, address and shift the (development) agenda. The expansiveness of DIY very much fits the model of transgressive pedagogy iterated by hooks (p. 12):

[knowing] beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions [...] a movement against and beyond boundaries [...] which makes education the practice of freedom.

Webster-Wright reminds us that 'Different professions and organizations have their own discourses as evidenced by shared jargon, behaviour, practices and expectations (p. 723)'. Such discourses serve to create insider/outsider positions, 'determining what counts as legitimate knowledge, and whose decisions are privileged' (*ibid.*). If DIY challenges the wider arts-sector discourse of personal development, DIY projects in turn potentially confront live art sectoral norms, challenging what is known and ways of knowing. Take for example Ria Hartley and Selina Thompson's *Spaces of Radical Agency* (DIY 12, 2015), aimed at 'politically black, ethnically/culturally diverse, artists of colour at any stage of their practice interested in the politics of their identities in relationship to the wider British context, and in particular their artistic practice in relationship to the arts and cultural sector' (LADA, *DIY: 2015 - Ria Hartley & Selina Thompson*). This workshop proposed to unsettle some sectoral presumptions around the provision of safe spaces, who they are for, and the work that they are intended to do. Their project description exemplifies the potential for DIY to orient professional development to pressing, complex issues identified by artists, and to create an agonistic 'safe space' for shared thinking and learning.

Whilst [safe] spaces are undeniably valuable in times of crisis, we feel a need to explore how we, as artists, stand in those spaces.

What are safe spaces? Do artists, in general, get to have safe spaces? Why should we have safe spaces? And why might black (politically black) artists in particular need that space? Who gets to be in a safe space, who gets to define that and how do you ensure that those that need it most have access to it? Does there need to be a tension and difficulty within those spaces? How do we ensure that a 'safe space' becomes radical, political and vital – a place of revolution, action and change, rather than a talking shop? And what is the legacy of the safe space? How do we carry its energy forwards, approaching our work with integrity and rigor?

We want to take some time - and some artists - who are interested in these questions too, and spend a weekend interrogating and

destabilising 'the safe space' to see how we can reframe it as a site of radical agency. [*Ibid.*]

As each lead artist determines who the project is aimed at, and creates the application and selection process for participants, they are empowered to set the learning environment. While some projects are addressed to practitioners' aesthetic interests (e.g. durational practice, autobiography, cabaret), others are addressed to communities of identity, including black, queer, trans, feminist and disabled. Others still focus on pedagogy itself, challenging current formal education models. *The Free University of Liverpool (FUL)* (DIY 8, 2011) invited artists to join them 'in the struggle to make critical education accessible to anyone who wants it' (LADA, *DIY: 2011 – The Committee The Free University of Liverpool*. See also *The Free University*, 2012). FUL sought 'teachers who want to be students and students who want to be teachers' and 'artists who want to be activists and activists who want to be artists'. Over two weekends, participants met to discuss and develop the curriculum and structure of FUL's Foundation Degree. Katie Etheridge and Simon Persighetti's *University of DIY* (DIY 12, 2015) responded to the 'colossal fees, ideological shifts, and the closure of iconic courses' by asking 'Can you start a University of Live Art in your front room, garden shed or local pub?' (LADA, *DIY: 2015 – Katie Etheridge and Simon Persighetti*. See also Etheridge, Persighetti and Broad, 2016).

Lead artists not only use the DIY framework to explore, test and develop their emergent ideas, they share their training experiences with other artists and participants. For DIY 2 (2004), Richard Layzell hosted a three day/one evening professional development project, *THE NETWORK*, to explore the relationship between networking and collaboration. The final evening of the project was opened to all hosts and participants. This initiative has been taken forward in all subsequent DIYs, in the form of a DIY Picnic, with everyone contributing food relevant to their DIY and lead artists and participants presenting a short summary of their project, sharing with others a sense of what happened, why, and where it might go.

Comparing the call for proposals for DIY 16 (2019) with the pilot call in 2002, it is striking how little has substantively changed. The invitation continues to flag up the idiosyncratic, unusual, eclectic, challenging and unconventional. Professional development in the sphere of live art continues to be 'as much about the exploration of ideas and experiences as training in skills and techniques'. In 2019, projects can take place anywhere, can take any form, and 'can be loosely or rigorously focused on a specific theme/content'. One shift is the sector's awareness of and commitment to greater diversity and inclusivity; since 2012 the DIY call (LADA, *DIY: 2012 – Call for Proposals*) has actively encouraged 'proposals from artists from culturally diverse backgrounds and disabled artists, and

artists working in other underrepresented or politicised territories'. DIY is a generative resource. When responses to the DIY call focus repeatedly on a particular issue or theme (for example ageing, motherhood or climate crises), DIY functions for LADA as an early warning system, making visible urgent topics that are then centred through DIY itself and also feed into the organisation's future activities, including Study Room Guides, publications, events and projects (Keidan, 2019).

DIY Future

That the DIY professional development scheme is led and managed by LADA arguably places it at odds with the wider DIY ethos of self-initiated. Andy Bichlbaum (Reilly, 2014, p. 127), member of the collective, Yes Men, proposes in answer to his question 'What is DIY?' that:

DIY is when you can just set out and do something, right? And you make it and there it is. You don't have to send in a job application, right? Maybe that's the definition: there's no application process.

In this DIY scheme there is an application process; many more applications are submitted for projects and places on projects than can be accommodated. LADA, its partners and lead artists are gatekeepers, reviewing and selecting projects and participants. Arguably, this dilution of the DIY ethos might go some way towards addressing limitations attached to the more general DIY-concept, particularly the implicit 'can-do' rhetoric which is divorced from material obstacles to participation (Chidgey, 2014, p. 108). Sometimes systemic structures make doing impossible. LADA provides an infrastructure for the scheme and for the lead artists, operating in a space of tension between 'DIY' (amateur) and 'Professional'. It is an enabler as much as gatekeeper, particularly through the provision of funding for the lead artists but also through funding to support the delivery of the projects (space and materials).

While participants do not pay fees, LADA is acutely aware that there remains a "cost" to participate. For artists juggling precarious jobs, time is often in short supply. Suggestions by participants on how DIY could be improved include paying a fee for attending. Without an increase in LADA's funding, this would inevitably mean far fewer projects, lead artists, and training places. To date it is not a trade-off that the organisation is willing to make.

Several projects across the DIY scheme have addressed the economic realities of being an artist. Holly Darton's *Reworking the day job* (DIY 4, 2007) invited artists to 'share, consider, challenge and examine the "day job", in an attempt to find methods that allow the "day job" to feed into artistic practice' (LADA, *DIY: 2007 – Reworking the 'day job'*). Catherine

Hoffmann's more recent *Maybe Jumping Is Enough* (DIY 14, 2017) brought together 'a group of scrounging, low-life austerity artists – those who are just scraping through' (LADA, *DIY: 2017 – Catherine Hoffmann*). Both DIY projects foreground the economic precarity of making a living as an artist. The repeated suggestion by participants that they are paid signals one of the most significant differences between the continuing professional development support for those in secure employment and the professional development schemes available to freelance artists. For many in professional roles, the cost of and time required for the (often compulsory) training is covered by the employer. The DIY professional development programme insistently recognises and addresses artists as professionals, but it does so in a wider social, cultural and political environment that systemically undervalues them and their work. While DIY succeeds in challenging the dominant paradigm of professional development, the context of its delivery is one of precarity and the ongoing struggle to *be* a professional artist. This raises the question of what this professional development is for - or where it leads - when the profession itself is so precarious?

The short evaluations of DIY produced between 2002 and 2014 present the holistic benefits of DIY, including empowerment, recognition of the imbrication of artistic and professional development, and the creation of a supportive peer network (crucial to resilience in the face of adversity). There are, though, more tangible strands of what we might think of as 'career development' to emerge from DIY, including the shift from workshop participant to paid lead artist and DIY as a springboard or step towards future commissioned and funded projects. As Keidan (2019) states, 'DIYs are a great conduit for artists for projects or ideas they are developing. We encourage [them] to apply to a DIY and test out how they might develop it into a project further down the line'. One example is GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN's *The Deadwood Stage* (DIY 2013), which explored 'exertion, endurance, cliché and the epic using the musical *Calamity Jane*' (LADA, *DIY: 2013 – GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN 'The Deadwood Stage'*). In 2014, their show, *The Live Art Community Musical*, which addressed the same topics explored in the workshop, was commissioned by SPILL Festival of Performance. LADA's success in securing additional funding for DIY has also contributed to 'career development', with DIY Progress, for example, specifically supporting ideas explored in DIY to be developed further. More recently, British Council funding has delivered new opportunities for UK-based artists to deliver DIYs in Toronto (Selina Thompson and Dickie Beau), and New York and Austin (Dickie Beau and Tania El Khoury).

Though DIY has been running for nearly 20 years, one aspiration remains to be realised. Keidan (2019) wants DIY to have impact beyond the arts

sector: 'We've always wanted DIY to be a model that other sectors can pick up', using the DIY-framework of collaboratively engaging with interesting ideas through interesting methodologies in place of formulaic workshops. DIY has given many live artists practice in imagining and delivering a different sort of 'professional development', one distinct from the neo-liberal economic agenda of maximising capacity, efficiency and productivity of workers. Bringing these live artists into different contexts to collaborate with other professionals positioned as co-creators rather than human capital would challenge much more than models of professional development training. This may be why DIY has yet to be more widely taken up.

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