

FEATURES

Do It Yourself: Nurturing Art Practice at Core

By Ayla Lepine - 07.03.2011

Deptford's Core Gallery is a dynamic artist-led collaborative space in London. jotta interviewed Rosalind Davis, Core Gallery's co-founder and co-director, to find out more about Core's new, exciting, and radically accessible DIY Education programme, run by a team of 17 dedicated and internationally-recognised arts professionals.



In 2009, Rosalind Davis and Elizabeth Murton began renting studio space at Cor Blimey Arts, an artists' studio space established in 1995 in a modern warehouse in the heart of Deptford. They saw potential in the space as an organic, flexible base in which to draw artists and curators together in creative exchange. Consequently, Murton and Davis founded Core Gallery there in the spring of 2010.

A small cluster of dedicated volunteers now run the organisation, nearly 20 artists are based in the onsite studios, and opportunities for engagement beyond this circle of practitioners are constantly being sought. For their first major show, 'Exquisite Corpse', Davis brought Nick Kaplony on board to facilitate a meeting of minds and artworks between eleven curators and eleven artists. The volume of visitors demonstrated to the Core Gallery team that they had hit on something viable, vibrant and important.

Davis describes Core's ongoing work as an "experiment" rooted in exploratory interactions between artists and curators with a rich collaborative fusion at its foundation. For its organisers and members, 'core' means a hub, an energy source, and a place for transformation. For Davis, collaboration means "listening to members and learning how to help them develop and lead their own projects."

With the help of a small grant from the Fenton Arts Trust, Core established DIY Educate to complement their innovative shows and provide a diverse forum for arts education. The DIY Educators are a team of 17 dedicated and internationally-recognised arts professionals including Jane Boyer, Becky Hunter, Graham Crowley and Rob Turner, who will offer practical workshops for artists, 'Nuts and Bolts Talks' ('the stuff they don't teach you at art school'), the feedback arena 'Engine ChatChat', and talks by established artists and curators.

Davis explains that the purpose of DIY Educate is to equip and support anyone who wants to "expand their experience, exposure and opportunities" and focus on the practical side of surviving as an artist.

Committed to cementing the relationship between art-making, activism and education, Davis was recently appointed to the AIR Council, a social and political advocacy organisation with a 15,000 strong membership. It is increasingly crucial that artists are empowered and mobilised to build sustainable practice, and Davis sees her collaborative work at Core Gallery - especially through the new DIY Educate programme - as a way of increasing the essential visibility of artists' work and social concerns.

Core will have its first birthday in April, with 10 exhibitions already in the pipeline, including 'Relay', Core's first touring exhibition featuring an artist-led studio exchange with the CoExist Gallery in Southend, and 'Home', which Davis is co-curating with Annabel Tilley, an exploration of 12 intergenerational artists' interpretations of domesticity and intimacy.

Membership to DIY Educate is £18 per year, and £9 per year for Student and recent Graduates, both give access to all the DIY workshops and talks at a discounted rate, with further opportunities, events and talks being offered across the year.

www.coregallery.co.uk

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