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Communication and Association– Artists Anonymous.

A Foundation, Liverpool Biennial
19 September – 30 November 2008

Reviewed by: [Alexandria Clark](#)

Opening Night at the A Foundation. A large warehouse space, surrounded by what was once a bustling site of industry: abandoned buildings with such interesting architecture either lacking windows or boarded up. Only the climbing plants creeping out of the cracks and crevices between bricks leave the traces and remnants of a time that has long disappeared.

I pressed my way through the cloud of smoke, continuously manufactured by the 'art viewers', and entered the space. The main attraction of the show for me was *Communication and Association*, titled by Berlin's Artists Anonymous. This piece held such intrigue after hearing, from a friend, about the toils and hard work that had gone into its creation. I had an insiders knowledge yet was completely kept in the dark. I knew a lot had been built, constructed; I knew that a lot of painting had taken place and that it had taken 2 solid weeks to create: such confusion came across my understanding as I walked into the piece.

I was greeted by a series of conjoining rooms, constructed from old portacabins and wooden boards that appeared quite rough and unfinished from the outside. Led into the first room, I was presented with **white**: white walls, white floor, white ceiling. Slightly puzzled, I notice a spot-lit photograph on the wall depicting a room covered in foil with a full bar but no people. I got closer, looking for a clue, looking for understanding, uncertain of what I was looking at. I smiled to myself, perplexed yet attempting not to look ignorant. Proceeding into the next room and the next, I found the same scene: the same white-washed walls but with a different spot-lit photograph. One was a child's room that had parts of it burnt; the next, a room that seemed to have an oversized, comically handmade television with stools. By this time, I was wondering how this would have taken so much time and effort and what was I supposed to be looking at?

The next room provided my answer: a Punch and Judy scene, where the set was painted in negative colour. As I stared at this photograph, the tip of my nose centimetres from the print, I saw the clue I had been searching for: a crack in the ceiling. I took two steps back and looked up, and there it was. There in that white paint covered room that crack could not be hidden, and everything suddenly fell into place. These scenes shown in the photographs had stood in the place I was now standing. These rooms had been built up, fabricated in these spaces, photographed, torn out and then white-washed. All that remained were the photographed memory and the remnants of what had once been.

Now I had the knowledge and had found out the code to what I was looking at, I made my way through the other four. Amazed by the work that must have been put in, the thought that only a day after it had been finished it had been dismantled, kept with me. The most spectacular room in this bizarre house was the kitchen. The photograph displayed a modern kitchen with a coat over the chair and a bag on the table which suggested the sense that people had been



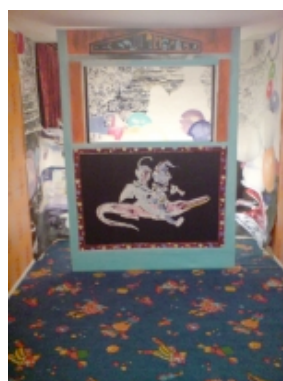
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Artists Anonymous,
'Communication and Association', Installation,
19/09/08. Photo: Graeme Mitchell.



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'Communication and Association', Installation,
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there. Overtaking the rest of this scene it was the stars that seemed to appear in the ceiling and the walls that captured my full attention. I by no means mean star-shapes; these looked as if they were at home in the night's sky, almost super-imposed onto it. After I had looked at this photograph, once again I took two steps back and looked up. There they were: the stars. Hundreds of small drill holes in the walls and ceiling providing the path for the light to pierce through. It was magical.

This feeling of envelopment by fantasy engulfed me as I was taken to the last part of my journey. A pile of belongings. It looked like it was the results of debt collectors, of a flood. A mound of everything that had been ripped off the walls and out of those rooms, just stood behind it. Chairs, tables, paintings, DVD players, all abandoned; left redundant. I just stood in wonderment; perplexed.

Communication and Association? What was being communicated and what was it being associated with?

I found that I had gone full-circle back to when I arrived: all I could see was its comment on this place and on its past. An industrial site within Liverpool next to the docks, that once had such hard work and hardship devoted to it, had been ripped apart and abandoned; with only the traces left, of what had once been. Time has passed and so has that era, and I just wonder whether this is what "Artists Anonymous" were intending, or was this just how it had affected me?

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I played a role in the setup of this mammoth installation and know it wasn't until the last day the master plan was revealed to strip back each room to a photograph. I know I could stand back in wonderment at the work in its entirety but I also know others that would be glad to hear you could feel the work devoted to it. Joel

posted on 2008-10-29 by Joel Muggleton

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Artists Anonymous, 'Communication and Association', Installation, 19/09/08. Photo: Graeme Mitchell.



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