# Alternative Art Pedagogies and the Success of the Commons (ArtsHums-AR-2019-1): Additional Information about the Project

Islington Mill Art Academy has existed for ten years as a generating force within Islington Mill and has a current cohort of 13 in its one year programme, c50-60 in a wider group that meets twice monthly, and 350 alumni. Set up by founding member Maurice Carlin, also co-director of Islington Mill, a Salford arts organisation established in 2000 and currently at a crucial point of its development. The Mill has been shortlisted for the Cultural Development Fund with a plan to scale cultural and economic impacts across 2 hectares of industrial workspace in Salford and bring a listed heritage complex into full cultural use (outcome due January 2019). Whether or not this funding is forthcoming, the shortlisting reflects amongst many other things eighteen years of intensive social engagement with the Mill’s local area, and a national reputation as an organisation able to deliver mixed use ecologies. IMAA has always been part of the Mill’s vision but has recently received new focus and direction as a direct result of Carlin’s appointment as first Visual Artist Clore Fellow 2016-17, resulting in a reimagining of IMAA’s potential to catalyse impact on a greater scale than previously.

The study will be set in a local, regional and European context. Alternative art schools emerged in the late C20th, catalysed by the Educational Turn, and proliferated during the crash of 2008. Artists, activists, academics, critics and curators have debated the structural merits and shortcomings of alternative pedagogies, including their (in) ability to provide sustainable alternatives to existing institutional structures and their (problematic) resourcing. Emerging within these debates about what ‘free’ art schools are really alternative *to* and how sustainable they are, is another discourse about the participation of diverse art pedagogies in wider social formations and the problematic imagining within institutional critique of an absolute outside to the mainstream, which according to Raunig, has led in turn to ignorance of techniques of self-government and modes of subjectification (Raunig, 2007; Haslam, 2018).

***Peers-in-common*** offers a lens through which to consider these debates, including: the growth of critically-informed artist-led cultural strategies; the expanded validation of the successful artist in its wider manfestiations; artist peer-led learning as the basis for modelling the successes, rather than the tragedies, of the commons (Ostrom, 2015). The study builds on existing partnerships between the supervisory team and the wider Faculty of Arts and Humanities and arts organisations locally, regionally and nationally and speaks to a number of priorities laid out in Greater Manchester’s current consultation document on cultural strategy and in the Arts Council’s (ACE) new ten year strategy. [[1]](#footnote-1)IM has also played a role in the development of Salford’s first cultural strategy[[2]](#footnote-2) through representation on the steering group, and co-director Bill Campbell sits on the board of the resulting Salford Culture and Place Partnership (SCPP).

[Download Shaping the Next Ten Years: Developing a new strategy for Arts Council England](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Shaping%20the%20next%20ten%20years_consultation_online_oct2018.pdf)

## The project aims to:

* develop notions of ‘comparison as rapport’ (Stengers, 2011), in exploring the potential for resource-sustaining collaborations across peer-educating and HEI/art school educating structures;
* critically investigate theories and practices of knowledge exchange through active engagement between peer-led and university delivered pedagogies
* consider how the presence of peer led artists in post-industrial Salford influences forms of sustainable cultural production
* explore how peer-led pedagogy creates opportunities for the emergence of asset-based narratives that challenge deficit-based accounts of those without formal qualifications that focus on the exceptional, the sensational and the negative
* consider, if and how, participation in the arts and leadership by artists creates opportunities for diversity and rapport compared with other forms of community participation
* show case art and research in partnership with regional, national and/or international partners
* develop an evidence base to inform policy and practice across Greater Manchester, the north and nationally, for peer-led learning and its links to the successful management of the commons (Ostrom, 2015).

These aims will be met through the following research phases.

### 1. Consult on research design

Establish stakeholder forum with IMAA, Islington Mill Foundation and representatives from regional art schools with an active interest, with the ambition to consult on research design with partners and representative stakeholders.

Review sources and develop a conceptual framework that links salient areas of enquiry (arts pedagogies; the Educational Turn; institutional and infrastructural critique; the commons; Artist as Leader; cultural development strategies in UK and Europe) together with appropriate methods / methodologies (instituent study; practice-led research/artistic research methods, qualitative and ethnographic methodologies, co-production/co-produced research design).

Create agreed work plan to include phases of research and clear and achievable milestones.

### 2. Experiential practice and instituent study, data collection, modelling and testing period

A period of artistic, ‘practice-led’, engaged scholarship and research to meet the aims above to include:

* examples of collaboration between peer-led and HEI-educated artists that presently exist (review of theory and practice);
* experiential and reflective review of what happens at IMMA (participation, dialogue, instituent study via artistic publication, exhibition etc.);
* co-production with IMMA cohort modelling peer-led learning approach that depends on the willingness and ability of the group to create a resource, from which it (and others) can benefit (rather than adherence to economic theory that tells us that resources are finite, and so we must compete for them).
* demonstration, exchange and comparison with wider stakeholder group in HEIs and non-art organisations on different instances of self-organised peer-led learning. And, in the light of these findings
* analysis of resources that would be needed to achieve closer partnership working: policy, political, economic, cultural, aesthetic.

### 3. Analysis

Analysis will be in line with mixed methods, but with the emphasis on the iterative application of artistic research methods. Alongside analysis of qualitative data (using e.g. grounded theory, coding etc.) there will be analysis of materials developed through multi-modal workshops involving stakeholders, representatives of HEIs and non-art institutions, researchers and participants, including ongoing iterative reflection and exegesis of art practice.

#### 4. Key references

Haslam, Susannah, 2018, *After the Educational Turn: alternatives to the alternative art school.* PhD thesis. Royal College of Art.

Ostrom, Elinor, 2015, *Governing the Commons: the evolution of institutions for collective action.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Raunig, G. 2007, [Instituent Practices No. 2](http://eipcp.net/transversal/0507/raunig/en) in *Institutional Critique, Constituent Power and the Persistence of Instituting*, Trans Aileen Derieg.

Stengers, I. 2011, ‘Comparison as a matter of concern’ in *Common Knowledge* 17:1.

1. ACE – People from every background benefit from public investment in culture “where public money is invested in culture, we have a responsibility to make sure that as many members of the public as possible regularly experience. Unless this happens, it will prove increasingly difficult to make the case for public investment in culture.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 8Gt Manchester: People: priority 1. To promote the importance of engagement across the life course; Economy: priority 5. To work with cultural organisations and artists to develop entrepreneurial activities that improve sustainability and strength of the sector; Economy: priority 7. To work with universities on research and knowledge about creative and cultural industries; Place: priority 3. To create opportunities for people to reflect on, and forge their place in the world, locally, nationally and internationally and use culture to develop and promote social and community cohesion. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)