

Uninvited Guests

A transcript of a lecture-performance by CHA X5. First presented at [Assembly Nottingham: Collaborative Programming](#), an online conference co-organised by a-n and Primary. 30 March 2023.

We want to think about the complex relationship between freelance artists and the salaried staff of publicly-funded organisations in the UK. How do these individuals – like us – understand their role within these organisations?

To quickly and crudely give a bit of context: these publicly-funded organisations seek to house and support artistic practice – but these efforts are often clouded by feelings of frustration and disappointment. There are deep and widespread tensions between freelance artists – whose work forms the content of these organisation’s activities – and the staff who work there – who are mostly occupied with administrative labour, and who seem to determine the working conditions for the freelance artists.

The frustrations within the field often give rise to a crude binarisation of these two groups; despite the fact that there are vast differences in the economies and processes across different organisations¹; the fact that the staff within these organisations are making decisions within an extremely compromised position; and finally that many of these salaried staff themselves are, or once were, practicing artists. These salaried roles often come with far greater demands, and much less pay, than equivalent jobs in the commercial sector. Yet, they still offer significant protections that are withheld from freelance workers – a difference that came into stark relief in the economic turmoil of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are not going to offer any quantitative assessment of this situation.² Instead, we will be thinking through four projects we've undertaken over the past few years, in order to offer a more philosophical, poetic and embodied reflection on how individuals can understand their presence, participation, and belonging in these organisational spaces.³ Each of these four projects centers a different figure – the Ghost, the Guest Host, the Demon and the Steward. Rather than settling on any as a definitive 'answer', we think they propose a different set of permissions, pleasures and constraints.

We hope they might be of use, as each of us continues to move through different organisations in varying roles and responsibilities; and as we all attempt to make sense of, and live with, those movements.

1. Ghosting

In 2019 we worked with a group of twenty artists, thinkers and cultural workers, to dress up as ghosts, and collectively haunt an arts organisation.

The two-day workshop was commissioned by LADA, the Live Art Development Agency⁴. It advertised itself as a “haunting of institutional space” to address “uncertainty, bad feeling, and the histories we’d rather forget.” We asked the applicants to briefly explain why they wanted to take part. One wrote: “what has gone so wrong in the current institutional landscape, that it makes me not want to practice art?” Everyone who applied was accepted.

The haunting took place at Toynbee Studios in East London; the home of Artsadmin, a significant organisation in UK experimental performance.⁵ They support artists through funding, space, producing and advocacy. The building also houses a few artist studios and the offices of some smaller cultural organisations, as well as a café and a theatre.

On the first day, we met with the participants, helped them transform into ghosts, and then encouraged them to go out to haunt the building for long durations.

As an organisation, Artsadmin had been going through a period of turbulence. There had been a change in leadership, and two resignations from the producing staff. Alongside long-term frustrations around power, lack of transparency, and conditions of pay, there was a rupture in trust with their artist community over a transphobic incident.⁶ In the lead up to the project, staff expressed their desire to 'do better'. The many meetings and emails were infused with a deep sense of fragility and risk.

The haunting was bound by some rules:

- The ghosts can cross boundaries. They can moving freely between studios, offices, private and public space.
- The ghosts can interact with the physical plane. They pick things up, slam doors, turn things on and off.
- The ghosts can't speak.
- The ghosts can't be seen.

The ghosts spent the two days wandering, lingering, testing, interrupting, and just generally being a mild nuisance. Some of them found and occupied the largest and most expensive studio in the building. Others lay around in the stairwells. Confidential emails were read over people's shoulders. One ghost stole a plant pot, and another tried to get away with a computer. One was told to “Fuck off” while lurking beside a poster which read: “STAND BY YOUR PRACTICE.”

Some of the staff said that being watched changed how they had worked. They performed diligence, and were especially attentive to progressive language and politics. They tried to make their work look more interesting. A senior producer reported that it was an unproductive day, asking: “Can you do the work to support artists, if your desk is the frontline

for artistic practice?” In the weeks following the workshop, we were told that people in the office had started to gleefully say to each other that this or that organisation “needs to be haunted!” We never asked them if they felt that Artsadmin had needed to be haunted; or, indeed, whether it still did.

We spent a long time after this workshop reeling from the pain, exhaustion and anger of the ghosts. We had also felt their glee. Ghosting gave us permission to break the rules: to misbehave, like little children, and to trash the place. It's not that we actually wanted to destroy these studios – we were happy to clean up afterwards – we just wanted to test and understand how our normal roles confine us in these spaces. How could things be otherwise?⁷

Our thinking for *Ghosting* – and across all these projects – is profoundly influenced by the artist and researcher Mick Wilson, who defines institutions as transgenerational projects.⁸ They were founded by people who came before us, who are no longer around; and we expect them to outlive anyone who is currently present. The potency of the Ghost is that – whoever they are – they came from before. Taking on this role gives us permission to shirk our usual identity of grateful and obedient guests, and instead embrace the wild entitlement of someone whose presence precedes all others.

2. Guest Hosts

We love *Ghosting*. We also wince at how pitiful it is. It is enabled by the refusal of dialogue, but that refusal simultaneously defines its limits.

And so we wondered about a different way to occupy these organisational spaces. After all, who are we to claim the role of the absent? No matter how small the fee, however temporarily we are given the keys – we are 'insiders'. How do we deal with that position of responsibility?

We designed a performance for a limited audience. It was called *In Agreement With...*, followed by the name of the organisation in which we presented it: so, *In Agreement with Dance4*, or *In Agreement with Chisenhale Dance Space*.⁹ We invited to this performance people who we and the staff felt were, or could be, invested in the organisation: founders, local organisers and artists, people who they were courting to join the board, and then all those amazing people with no professional ties to the place, but who go to everything that's put on there.

The performance starts in the evening, after most of the staff had gone home. We met our guests outside, and then we gave them a tour of the building. We tried to explain the place: How did the organisation first come into being? How was the building used before its current occupants? What kinds of work had we seen there – and what can each of us actually remember? What is the wider ecology; and what are its formal or informal economies?

Our knowledge was partial, but we wouldn't try to hide those gaps – because this is when the guests would speak up and share their knowledge. As we collectively pieced together a picture of the organisation, we would begin to understand all the diverse experience and knowledge floating about the room.

The tour finishes in the office, where we had asked a few staff members to hang out after work. We asked them about their role at the organisation, the things they'd been working on that week, and how that fitted into the collective picture we had been building. We also asked them about their lives outside of work.

And while one of us asking these questions, the other was preparing the space: setting up a speaker, and plugging in a number of cheap plastic disco lights around the room, and quietly clearing two office desks. And when the Q&A had finished, we would start playing a techno track, get up on the desks on our hands and knees, and dance.

It was a repetitive dance. A dance of head-banging, shaking, thrashing, punching, thrusting and kicking. The desks would wobble and creak. Our bodies would tremble and get tired. We had invited our guests into this organisational frame – and tried to point out all of its different imperatives and tensions and ideals – and then we asked them to sit with this mute, energetic, exhausting, unjustifiable dancing.

Who can speak for this space? Who can invite others inside? What does it mean to do this from our limited position – as Guest Hosts – with no formal role, incomplete knowledge, and only a temporary hold on the keys?

Later, we would read the economist Guy Standing write about the commons, and the old custom of beating the bounds. Every few years, communities would gather to walk around the perimeter of common land; to remind themselves of its edges, to preserve that knowledge across generations – and to protect this resource from the slow creep of private interests.¹⁰

And we thought: yes, it's a bit like that. With this dancing, we were trying to untether ourselves from the day-to-day beat of the organisation, and – in the company of these past, present and future stakeholders – tune into its transgenerational rhythm. The whole evening is an attempt to trace the boundaries that constitute this space – this publicly-funded cultural organisation – and to not let our understanding of these agreements be entirely determined by the people who temporarily hold office there.

We finish the evening by asking everyone to give a toast: to raise their glass, and declare a wish they had for the future of the organisation. And these desires would inevitably contradict one another. That's how it is. These places are composed of many people, past and present, with all their competing visions and values.

But before these toasts – while we were still on the desks, our bodies still trembling from our

unsustainable dancing – one of us would sing. Our shaky breath would temporarily fill the space. The transformation was palpable, yet invisible and fleeting. This ephemeral charge defines both the potency and limit of this work.

Less than a year after the performances of *In Agreement With...*, one of the host partners, Dance4, announced a major transition – a merger with another dance organisation DanceXchange – that had, apparently, been years in motion.¹¹ And it felt so humiliating to first hear about this through a post on social media. We – and many others – had been doing informal ambassadorial work for them for years. We had made this performance to gesture to that, and to soften the boundaries between those holding formal office and all us unofficial stakeholders. But we had all been excluded from this decision. We had tried to articulate and perform an agreement – but we realised there was nothing that really kept those in power to this promise.¹² It was all talk; just another event. There was no way we could ensure that they kept their side of the deal.

3. Demons

One solution to the complexities of artist-institutional relations is for artists to unionise as a class of exploited workers. We agree with and practice this strategy, yet are uneasy with the binaries it can lead to between the professional and unprofessional, the artist and the participant, the worker and the hobbyist. Many people – our friends, ourselves – practice within and outside of formalised economies.¹³

Many of us are excluded from formal roles of governance and decision-making. But rather than entirely bemoan this position, it's worth asking what this institutional informality might afford. What kinds of pleasures are made possible when living in the cracks, and operating through inscrutable economies?

All of these projects use housing and hosting as a metaphor to think about institutional belonging. The 'outside' will endlessly return as a compelling fantasy. It is imbued with both possibility and precarity.¹⁴ But the myth of 'the wild' always comes from the perspective of those who reside within the walls – it is their projection and fantasy.¹⁵ 'Wildness' won't tell us much about lives that are actually lived 'outside'.

But we wonder: how might one go about trying to work with or sustain a feral ecology? an ecology of beings who are not governed by our laws, who eschew formal representation, who carry themselves with obscure and opaque logics? How could we support such an incoherent and self-contradictory group, without demanding they to abide by our rules? How can we support the undomesticated – those we do not wish to domesticate – the monsters who keep trying to bite our hands, as we attempt to feed them?

We began to fantasise about the figure of the Demon. We wondered what it would be like to make friends with such fickle, malicious, unmanageable weirdos:¹⁶

- We do not know their names. They do have names. But to know a demon's name is to hold it in your power – to single it out and subject it to the law. Instead we call them ‘car face’, ‘anti-christ’, ‘drunk bird’. Our recognition is provisional. We do not know these demons and we cannot trust them. We must remain ever-vigilant lest they turn around and devour us.
- We know that they feel. That they are full of feeling. They are malice, weariness, glee, hurt, spite, fright, and pride. Despite their monstrousness, we feel these feelings echo within ourselves. They feel the resonance too. They are curious, they are hungry. They want to meet you.
- We know that they are multitude. They are without leadership. They neither agree with one another, nor speak with a shared voice. Yet they are always speaking: muttering, whispering, whining, cat-calling, screaming, babbling and moaning. They cannot be held to what they say. Their words are as steady and as lethal as smoke.
- We know that they travel in groups. They often appear in consistent size and neat rank. Don't let that fool you: there are always more out of sight. This is not to say they are infinite – merely uncountable. They are partial, excessive and elusive.
- We know that they cannot be stopped. Tearing up a demon might briefly dispel it. But they can endlessly return; and likely with less kindness the next time. There is risk, but don't forget what they can offer: a whispered secret, wordless guidance, a taste of wild pleasure. Their grins are illuminating and infectious. Despite everything, we are grateful for their lethal presence.

4. Stewards

We carry ourselves differently, in different organisations.

In many, we're friendly and pretty easy-going: we enjoy the work they present and attend the parties – and in return, we offer some of our attention, playfulness and gentle cheerleading. In some places, we are more boundaried: we sign the contract, get in, do our work, try to have a little fun, and then get out. Some, we avoid some entirely.

And to a select few, we really commit. We take on formal or informal roles of responsibility: becoming a member, joining a working group, organising a protest, taking on a salaried role, or a position on the board.¹⁷

Rather than understanding any fixed binary between the inside or outside of these publicly-funded organisations, we ask: Where are we offering our energy – and who will have us? Where are we welcome? What is it mean to take up a formal role of office? What torches are we able and willing to take up, to keep this or that place going for another few years?

We're not suggesting that these entrances are simple or easy. Many doors are closed to many people, for all the classic reasons. We are talking about very complex processes of belonging: and how our sense of self develops through the spaces we inhabit. Who we end up becoming, is significantly determined by which doors have been opened – or have remained closed – to each of us. Yet regardless of where we end up, we were all, one way or another, uninvited guests; who entered this niche field and decided to make some kind of home here.

And we wanted to think about these questions of formal office and commitment through a final figure, the Steward, in relation to some materials we have been developing toward a solo exhibition called *Any Other Business* - that will take place at Gasleak Mountain, an artist-led space in Nottingham.

4.1 Stewards

At the center of this project is a series of embroidered portraits called *The Stewards*.

Each of these portraits depicts an individual who holds a senior role of office in an organisation we feel connected to: for example, a small arts venue we're doing a project with, or a massive university in which we work; a political representative; or a private company that holds a public contract to provide some essential infrastructure. Or even, a leader of a local organisation – with whom we have no formal or direct relationship – yet whom we nonetheless feel some expectation towards, who we think has some responsibility towards us and our communities.

These portraits are drawn from photographs we find online: from the organisation's website or press releases. These faces of individuals have been offered by the organisation for a public viewer. These non-consensual portraits are not an attempt to try bridge the distance between us and these figures, but rather a way for us to try touch and trace this distance itself. To understand how these institutional structures position us in relation to each other. How are the public allowed to see and understand these people? What are the distinctions and overlaps between this individual, and the role of office they hold: with all of its permissions, responsibilities, and compromises? What parts of this person are available to public scrutiny; what information is held within the organisation; what parts of themselves are bordered by the realm of their private life?¹⁸

We usually display these portraits by dangling them from the ceiling. They are suspended with embroidery floss – which is made from 6 threads twisted around each other – which causes these Stewards to gently and continuously spin. They keep turning, trying to see everything in the room, trying to see in all directions at once, trying to see what's behind them. And in doing so, they continually expose their backs. On the front, these eyes look guarded and distant. On the reverse, we see taut and vulnerable threads that look like strained nerves and tendons running under their skin.

UK public arts funding increasingly imposes multiple imperatives – artistic, educational, civic and financial – that diverge from, and often contradict each other.¹⁹ To take on a position of leadership in these organisations, one must continually turn one's attention towards different values, processes, stakeholders – and try to satisfy these different demands, on an ever shrinking budget. As Alan Lane (the artistic director of Slung Low in Leeds) puts it – management is not a marathon, it's a beep test.²⁰ You have to constantly change direction in order to attend to different tasks and needs. You accelerate, and then pivot; losing all momentum.

4.2 Pull Yourself Together

What does it take to maintain such a position of responsibility? To be the host; or to hold onto the keys, to invite, to be the manager, to give the green light, to sign off?

We've been doing a series of drawings called *Pull Yourself Together*. These drawings depict fields of lonely figures, crowded amongst each other yet each locked into some indecipherable angst. They are all mismatched arms, twisted legs – and seem to use these strangely elastic limbs to bind themselves together. Their gestures of holding feel simultaneously protective, self-comforting, anonymising, masturbatory, and virtuosically contortionist.

We see a mess of self-involved figures trying to hold onto their shit; in the face of all the unavoidable leakiness and collapse that comes with having a body. And we think about the offices we work within and move through – full of individuals coping and not coping – trying to get through the day, the week, the month, this current crisis or the next.

We are twelve years deep into austerity. We presume that we are all working in messy situations that are stretched and underfunded; and saturated in structural issues that are failing us all.²¹ Individuals are continually asked to go the extra mile to make things work. We should not demand individual responsibility for institutional failings. But it's often not clear what the line is between structural failings and personal baggage. We are all entangled in many relations and communities – that simultaneously nourish and demand from us. Where do we draw lines around our attention and care, in order to honour the commitments to which we are already bound?

How much do we let the mess of our lives spill over the neat boundaries of professionalism? What needs to be sorted out – or at the very least for now, tidied out of sight – before we enter into this or that conversation, or office? What is it like to work with people (like ourselves) who endlessly seem to struggle to hold their shit together? How much does one need to cohere as an individual, before one can bear an encounter with an other? What does it mean to take responsibility, within a compromised position of personal instability and structural neglect?

4.3 Self Possessed

And what if this is taken to the other extreme? What happens when we hold onto our shit too tightly?

In a performance called *Self Possessed*²², a figure gives a slow and exhaustive account of themselves, using language drawn from medical, therapeutic and social justice contexts. We hear that they respect all sexual and social boundaries. That they reply to their emails promptly. That they never ask for more than what they need.

At first, these claims of good behaviour seem benign and even laudable, but inevitably they begin to contradict each other. Our doubts starts to creep in: even if someone could follow all of these rules, why does this figure need to insist on – or even clarify – their ethical perfection?

Some degree of self-possession – of trustworthiness and self-knoweldge – seems desirable from anyone occupying a position of public responsibility. But this effort of exhaustive articulacy and accountability has a sinister edge. Self-"possession", taken to this extreme, becomes demonic.

A demand for total transparency denies any interior opacity. There are endless things that we will never know about each other; and further, that we will never know about ourselves.²³ We can't account for ourselves fully; nor should we. And we should not be denied the dignity or right to have flaws.²⁴

4.4 Thoughts and Prayers

At the base of this exhibition, we imagine a little constellation of these small clay fires, that are called 'Thoughts and Prayers'.

"Thoughts and prayers" is a clichéd expression used by officials when they want to avoid taking any material action to actually address a situation. We are curious about the function of these inevitable performances of feeling. Any expression of care or emotion can so quickly ossify into empty sentiment. The genuine devotion – the thoughts and the prayers – of many officials might be palpably felt, yet it seems nearly impossible to neatly identify or evidence.

Each of these flames is a futile attempt to articulate the insubstantial and ephemeral quality of fire through the heaviness of clay. And we wonder how the indeterminacy of this institutional feeling – of belonging, of devotion, of care – might be expressed through their unflickering flickering – or 'blazeless blazing', to borrow a term from the poet Will Alexander.²⁵

We think back to the reckless dancing of *In Agreement With...* – the kicking, the thrusting – through which we try to pour our energy into these organisations. Doing that dance can feel

like we are trying to keep the roof up, by filling the space with heat and vibration; no matter how unwelcome or misplaced our efforts might be. But how does it leave us?

Shaky. Tired. We try make this wet and weighty clay reach up and defy gravity; to achieve suspension. But as they dry, these heavy tongues of flame sag, crack, and become still. Some of them can barely hold themselves up from the floor.

The four figures we have spoken about – the Ghosts, the Guest Hosts, the Demons, the Stewards – are different ways to make sense of feeling. Feelings of belonging, inclusion, exclusion, compromise, responsibility, devotion and care. A lack of care, and caring far too much.

We think about our friends, who have given years of their lives to sustain different communities and movements and organisations.²⁶ They picked the hill they wanted to die on, and then have lived their lives there – tending, growing, labouring, devoting – keeping the flame going for another few years, another generation.

We live, and then we die. We try our best, and we imagine you do too. And we thank you for your energy, your warmth, your efforts, and your care.

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1. It's easy to make despairing claims about 'the art world'. We are reminded of a reply to such claims, that we have often heard expressed by the artist Jesse Darling: "Which art world?" Many different art worlds overlap – but their languages, economies, politics and processes differ. ↩
 2. For that, we direct you to the recent and fantastic report by Industria that was commissioned by a-n. Industria (2023) *Structurally Fucked*. England: a-n The Artists Information Company. Available [here](#). ↩
 3. We want to note that our practice moves across many disciplines – theatre, dance, and visual arts. We are very aware that differ significantly in terms of their conventions, processes, languages, economies, and values. Our thinking is particularly influenced from time spent in the relatively niche discussions of UK experimental dance. These projects take place within very different contexts, and we are attempting to generalise our thinking to address widespread conditions. We suspect that we might at times lose sight of some the nuances of these disciplinary differences. However, we hope that some of what we will speak about might resonate with people who might be working and thinking from very different contexts. ↩
 4. The Live Art Development Agency's website is [here](#). The workshop was commissioned as part of LADA's annual (but now discontinued) 'DIY' programming, which offered professional development for artists, that was (very unusually!) designed and run by artists. ↩

5. See Artsadmin's website [here](#). ↩
6. See a letter of accountability from Artsadmin's leadership [here](#), published 22 May 2019. ↩
7. In 2020 we put together an e-book *Ghosting.zip*, which collected images from the workshop and extensive reflections on the project as a whole. You can download it from our website [here](#). ↩
8. “The significance of institution in difference from organisation is: a trans-generational project. Institution has a sense of something which is a kind of a contract, that outlives the parties who make the contract. And I think that is an important kind of construct, particularly in the context of political problems which are not amenable to the timeframes of one life.” Mick Wilson (2015) *Thinking Through Institutional Critique*. Presented at: Thinking Through Institutions, The Para Institution, Galway. Available [here](#). ↩
9. Both Dance4 and Chisenhale both offered funds to help make this work. [Dance4](#) is an organisation in Nottingham that supports experimental dance. It was originally founded as the Leicester International Dance Festival, but transitioned into Dance4 in 1994, and in 2022 merged with DanceXchange in Birmingham to form a new organisation called Fabric. [Chisenhale Dance Space](#) is a member-led dance center in East London, with a very long legacy of experimental practice in the UK. It was originally founded by the [X6 Collective](#). ↩
10. Guy Standing (2019) *Plunder of the Commons: A Manifesto for Sharing Public Wealth*. London: Pelican. p.35 ↩
11. See [here](#). ↩
12. Guy Standing here is clear that those who manage or govern common land ("stewards") should be held accountable by "gatekeepers" – community members who monitor these transgenerational agreements, and who have the power to challenge those stewards. (*Plunder of the Commons*, pp.50-51). ↩
13. We are not suggesting people should cross picket lines, or suggest people should passively accept appalling working conditions. However – in the face of the ongoing reality institutional failure to adequately support practitioners – we are part of an ecology of DIY practice that takes place, at times, without pay. We try, as best as we can, to ensure that the work we do in institutional contexts is fairly remunerated – but it's clear that that is dependant on and finds its source in unfunded practice. It's clear that these ecologies of un(der)funded practice are partly responsible for sustaining appalling funding conditions – but it's not clear how this can be addressed without demanding people stop practicing entirely. Some of these tensions were addressed in [an open](#)

[letter](#) Paul wrote to Rohanne in May 2022. ↩

14. The 'outside' is an (imaginary) space where we are free of the agreements and obligations of the inside. Obviously not all conventions and constraints are good, but we are dependant for some forms of social protocol, safeguarding and accountability. Paul wrote a text that highlights how much UK theatre and performance takes place outside of and in-between organisations and their capacity for oversight and accountability, and how this can enable and sustain situations of exploitation and abuse. The text sits within [an online archive](#) of testimonies of Chris Goode's working practices. ↩
15. This critique of 'the wild' is particularly indebted to anti-colonial scholars and artists – particularly Chinua Achebe's 1958 novel *Things Fall Apart*. Another way that 'the wild' can arise within this discussion is in relation to the figure of the artist and the autonomy of art. Paul recently wrote a short text [here](#) that critically addresses this. ↩
16. This text has many influences – particularly Jacques Derrida's discussion of the namelessness of "the barbarian" before the Law. Jacques Derrida (2000) *Of hospitality / Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond* (Trans. Bowlby, R.) Stanford University Press: California. ↩
17. The topic of freelance artists taking on roles of institutional leadership is vexed, but outside of the scope of this presentation. In short: leadership roles of UK arts organisations are mostly held by people whose careers developed through salaried roles as administrators, producers and programmers. There have been extensive conversations in performance and dance (e.g. Artist. Curator. Leader. convened by Dance Art Foundation) that address this topic, as well as many institutional initiatives to appoint such artist leaders (e.g. Theatre Royal Plymouth's ['Creative Leaders'](#) programme in February 2023. ↩
18. These questions feel particularly pertinent in the context of the arts, where traditional distinctions between personal, professional and private life seem to map quite badly on to the reality of how people work. ↩
19. Emily Pringle (2019) *Rethinking Research in the Art Museum*. London: Routledge. pp.10-11 ↩
20. We feel sure that Alan Lane has expressed this quite explicitly somewhere, but we can't find it. He frequently uses the metaphor of the 'beep test' when reflecting on his work on his Twitter feed (e.g. [here](#) and [here](#)). ↩
21. We don't wish to imply that the pain of these structural failings is felt equally. But we agree with Fred Moten when he articulates how our solidarity is formed through our recognition that these failings harm all of us: “the problematic of coalition is that coalition isn't something that emerges so that you can come help me, a maneuver that always

gets traced back to your own interests. The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us. I don't need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?"

Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2013) *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. Wivenhoe, New York, New Watson: Minor Compositions. p.10 ↩

22. This performance was developed through a residency at Chisenhale Dance Space in summer 2021, and first performed at Manchester Art Gallery in November 2021 at an event organised by Iniva. ↩
23. "if it is precisely by virtue of one's relations to others that one is opaque to oneself, and if those relations to others are the venue for one's ethical responsibility, then it may well follow that it is precisely by virtue of the subject's opacity to itself that it incurs and sustains some of its most important ethical bonds." Judith Butler (2005) *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Fordham University Press: New York. p.38 ↩
24. To think back to the demons; as much as they evoke some fantastical wild 'outside', they are all self-portraits. The Buddhist teacher Lama Rod Owens encourages us to make friends with the unflattering aspects of ourselves: "I believe that anger is important. At no point have I said to get rid of anger, because you shouldn't. Just like i will never say get rid of ego, because you shouldn't. [...] everything has a place. If it's outside of our experience, then it begins to become really dangerous for us. It becomes subconscious and then that becomes a demon or a monster." Lama Rod Owens (2020) *Love and Rage: The Path of Liberation through Anger*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books. p.17 ↩
25. Will Alexander (2022) *Divine Blue Light: for John Coltrane*. San Francisco: City Light Books. p. xiii ↩
26. We have been working with Mick Wilson's definition of institutions as transgenerational projects, particularly in regard to formalised organisations (that might be registered as a charity, community interest company, etc.). But it is important to clarify that these 'transgenerational projects' can be other kinds of things – including political and social movements that do not cohere as a particular group. We are thinking here of how Audre Lorde reflects on how her efforts fit within a wider movement: "I have found that battling despair does not mean closing my eyes to the enormity of the tasks of effecting change, nor ignoring the strength and the barbarity of the forces aligned against us. It means teaching, surviving and fighting with the most important resource I have, myself, and taking joy in that battle. It means, for me, recognising the enemy outside and the enemy within, and knowing that my work is part of a continuum of women's work, of reclaiming this earth and our power, and knowing that this work did not begin with my birth, nor will it end with my death. And it means knowing that within this continuum, my life and my

love and my work has particular power and meaning relative to others.” Audre Lorde
(2020 [1980]) *The Cancer Diaries*. London: Penguin Random House. p.10 [↩](#)