

CIRCUS ARTSPACE - ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020

Although the Covid-19 pandemic has paused our exhibitions programme, it has given us time to reflect and to experiment with working remotely and online

Intern Programme

In response to the lockdown climate, we extended the duration of each internships to 4 months to allow the interns to gain sufficient and different types of experience, given that they could no longer take part in our hands-on exhibition programme. In year two of Circus Artspace operations (April 2020 – April 2021), we have offered in total three longer intern placements. To strengthen and extend the intern experience, we have developed a new structure for continuing engagement of our intern alumni in the shape of a partner collective, Circus Sideshow.

For the Year 2 programme, one internship has been completed (Isabel), one is in progress (Sophie), and the third is to be recruited. The placements have again proved to be rewarding to all parties, engaged in a rather different mix of activities, including online presentation of work, project development, collaborative planning and bid writing, creative use of Zoom, social media management, and operational administrative tasks.

Hester Grant: Winter 2019-20 (January – May)

Our fourth intern of Year 1 (Ap 19 – Ap 20). We extended the duration of Hester's placement due to the uncertainties of Covid-19 – how long it would last and what we'd be able to deliver.

BA (hons) Fine Art at Moray College UHI, 2016

- *Inversesh*: In response to the Covid-19 threat we postponed Hester's idea of Circus Zine Fest. Instead Hester created and curated, *Inversesh*, a series of online zines and managed our social media throughout April and May 2020.
- *Circus Zine Fest 2021*: Hester will now develop this weekend event for 2021, and deliver it with support from Circus Sideshow.

"I believe Circus has been extremely valuable in pushing forward and showcasing contemporary art in Inverness and the Highlands. Getting involved in exhibitions and working with artists was incredibly inspiring and led to me apply for a masters at Glasgow School of Art and getting accepted into the MLitt Fine Art Practice programme."

Isabel McLeish: Summer 2020 (17 June – 14 October)

Isabel was our first intern recruited during lockdown and provided an opportunity to work remotely with an intern from outwith Inverness. Isabel is based near Kyle of Lochalsh, Wester Ross. This was a valuable learning experience for the whole team.

BA (Hons) Contemporary Art Practice, Grays School of Art, 2019

- *Liminal Lives*: a socially engaged postal project. Isabel issued an open call inviting participants to create a postcard in a Scotland-wide art project to express experiences of 2020 (e.g. of covid-19, lockdown, social distancing) or perspectives of current matters.
- *Crossing Thresholds*: Isabel designed and delivered a series of three artists' interviews to explore how the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown has impacted their lives and art practice.

"Due to the internship, I have networked more widely and connected with practicing artists across the U.K and more opportunities have been made available to me because I have

managed to meet new people (even when it's all been online!). The Circus Artspace team have been incredibly supportive and encouraging throughout. By working on two very different projects, I have been able to develop a range of skills such as webpage and video editing, interviewing techniques and social media promotion."

Sophie Brown: Autumn/Winter 2020 (27 October- 23 February 2021)

BA (Hons) Painting, Grays School of Art, Aberdeen, 2020

- *Super Market*: in the Victorian Market exhibition, Sophie curated her degree show work in Unit 3, formerly trading as 'Esoteric Earth' crystals. During her final years of study, her work began to focus on distorting historic Feminist theory on the female body and how it is viewed by society.
- *The Wicked Witch: an exploration into depictions of the witch in historical and contemporary artworks*. Sophie is currently developing a 2-part video series, discussing representations of folklore and "the witch" within historical and contemporary artworks by Female artists.

"Given the current circumstances, the chance to display my work publicly was a huge opportunity – one that was especially significant given my own graduation lacked a physical degree show and my neglected degree show work had been lurking ominously without purpose in my attic for months.

Through the early planning stages, I can definitely say I learnt a lot about what goes on behind the scenes of planning and facilitating events, which was hugely beneficial given this was an area of interest for me and experience I hoped to gain through this whole process. From health and safety, to risk assessments, technology failure and maintaining a COVID safe environment – there was definitely a lot to discuss, experience and learn along the way.

One of my tasks as intern, was to help out with the invigilating of the space while it was open to the public. This was one of my first experiences where I have been given the responsibility of doing this solo and was undoubtedly the baptism of fire I needed."

To be Recruited: Spring 2021 (9 March – 8 June)

Deadline 15 February. We will return to 3-month placements, given we have now established an online working culture and mechanisms for working within lockdown.

CIRCUS SIDESHOW

A new art collective has been formed by the former Circus interns. It was established in May by Hester Grant, Holly Osborne, Jack Kay and Sadie Stoddart. All past interns will have the opportunity to join this growing network after their 3 month internship. Sideshow members are currently supporting each other's practices through different learning and sharing opportunities, while continuing to be part of the wider Circus family.

"We aim to continue expanding the graduate arts community across the Highlands and Islands through using the skills we have learnt during our internships with Circus. As we progress, we hope to facilitate this through different and diverse events and exhibitions.

Supporting each other and our practices through different learning and sharing opportunities, along with peer review sessions, we will continue to be part of the wider Circus family.'

CIRCUS ARTSPACE Programme

We have delivered the activities below, in which interns participated as a learning experience.

Exhibitions:

#7 Waterscape 12-18 March 2020

Led by Nicola Gear (sound installation) with Marco Dessardo (sculptural installation/performance) and Tracey Rowledge (drawings), this exhibition explored water from different perspectives. It launched with an artists' talk evening, but closed 4 days early on 18 March due to Covid-19.

Waterscape: Online Exhibition 19 - 22 March 2020

On closure of the exhibition space, the artists set off on a journey with Marco's boat sculpture. Marco, Nicola and Cornelia Konrads (filming) headed into the remote West coast of the Highlands with *Basiluzzo*, Dessardo's sculpture boat. The boat was tested and filmed on water to show online.

#8 Super Market 10-20 December 2020

Working in collaboration with Inverness' historic Victorian Market, *Super Market* featured 20 artists exhibiting in empty shop units. They took inspiration from the market's history, paying tribute to the wide variety of former shops and tenants. It featured window commissions and film works, alongside a 3 talks/guided tours and 4 weekend workshops, delivered following Covid-19 guidelines.

Online Events

Wild and Weedy: participation in Children's Art Week - 29 June - 3 July 2020

This series of three online activities is inspired by former intern Sadie's artistic practice and incorporates the natural world into art. Our 'Wild and Weedy' step-by-step guides embrace nature's weeds and celebrate their wild and unique qualities. These activity guides were published on the Circus [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and on the website.

(en)countering crisis + re:making futures: an Online Conversation - 12 October 2020

Circus Artspace worked in partnership with Fadzai Mwakutuya, Afro Art Lab as part of Repository of the Undercommons (RotU), to support this creative climate conversation. This facilitated conversation, hosted by Fadzai, brought together artists from Scotland and Zimbabwe to discuss how artist labour could be essential work for climate action and what tools artists can offer for raising awareness and diversifying conversations around climate change.

LAC Online Meet Up - 22 November 2020

Circus Artspace hosted this online social meet-up for Highland artists, designers and craft makers. We shared our lockdown activity and invited 6 emergent artists/collectives to present recent projects.

GOING FORWARD – CIRCUS ARTSPACE 2021 PROGRAMME STATEMENT

In 2021, Circus Artspace wants our programme to track the shifting demographic of the Highlands & Islands and focus on the hidden, forgotten and unheard voices within our community. We want to diverge from Highland cliches and traditional notions of romanticism to reveal unexplored narratives and illustrate the interweaving, international cultures of our place.

Though we are a relatively new artist-run initiative, we have committed to building a public programme around contemporary visual arts. We want to amplify a wider diversity of voices, places and experiences and promote equality, with a focus on non-dominant narratives and communities.

We enjoy bringing people from our broad audience of ages and interests together to create memorable experiences. Our aim is to develop events which are inclusive and build on these highly valued moments of commonality and community.