

IMPACT 8: Borders and Crossings: The Artist as Explorer
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EASTprint

Carl Rowe

Norwich University of the Arts

*"At first, artists sent their work in crates to be unpacked in the gallery.
Eventually they were arriving in Norwich ready to make the work in situ"*

Lynda Morris, EAST curator, talking at NUCA October 2008.

In this quote, Lynda Morris is referring to the period 1991 to 2009, the duration of *EASTinternational* open exhibition. EAST was an annual open exhibition delivered during the summer months in the vacated fine art studio spaces of Norwich School of Art and Design (later called Norwich University College of the Arts and now called Norwich University of the Arts). The simple structure, an annual cycle of two invited selectors, one artist and one curator, gallerist or critic, ensured a current and responsive representation of contemporary art. Many of the artists were in the early stages of their careers and in most cases EAST provided the first opportunity to be presented on an international level.

The period 1991 to 2009 is undoubtedly one of great significance. In terms of art this can be characterised by the shift towards socially engaged activity through increased collaborative and dialogical working practices. It is defined in one respect by the sociality of Nicolas Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics and in contrast by Claire Bishop's less convivial context of social antagonism. In his essay *Don't Look Now: Art in the Social Sphere*, Dave Beech triangulates Bourriaud and Bishop with the views of Grant Kester and posits a more workable model for the integration of art, politics and the social sphere,

what Beech refers to as “*the art of encounter*”. Print, in all its forms and technological hybridisation, has played a crucial role in that evolution.

This talk is an attempt to chart the shifts that have occurred in contemporary art since the early 1990s, primarily through the context of print and with specific reference to EAST. Analysis is based on material accessed from the EAST archive and also from an interview with Lynda Morris, EAST curator, which took place on the 10th April 2013.

The inaugural 1991 EAST selected by Andrew Brighton and Sandy Moffat featured two prints, both etchings. Both of these works exude a skilful handling of traditional intaglio print processes. Editioned and framed, they represent the commercial reliability of well-crafted outcomes, of collectable commodity. The first EAST is fairly conservative with strong links to late twentieth century new figurative art. This perhaps falls short of the view that Morris has of the potential for print to be a medium for socio-political mobilisation and a vehicle for co-authorship. To provide context, back in 1970 Morris arranged a display of Art & Language publications at the ICA and in 1972 curated *Book as Artwork 1960 to 1970* at Nigel Greenwood’s Gallery. She also published the first book of Ian Breakwell’s Diary Pages, which led to Breakwell producing a portfolio of diary page prints whilst undertaking a John Brinkley Fellowship at Norwich School of Art & Design in 1982.

EAST 1992 selected by Helen Chadwick and Marjorie Allthorpe-Guyton was predominantly painting and sculpture, incorporating only a few examples of print in the broadest sense such as Bruce Williams’ photo-mechanical pierced steel stencil works and Sean Taylor’s embellished photographic portraits.

1993 selected by Konrad Fischer and David Tremlett represented a conspicuous absence of print and only a small amount of photography.

Jan Dibbets and Rudi Fuchs selected 1994 presenting prints by Simon Poulter and Victoria Hall. Poulter and Hall both produced works that utilise industrial printing methods and what is significant is that they 'install' printed material rather than 'hang' framed works.

It is in EAST 1995 selected by Marian Goodman and Guiseppe Penone that we observe a significant and defining use of print. Jeremy Deller, as yet relatively unknown, installed a series of posters and flyers on noticeboards in and around Norwich. The crude technical execution of the works complete with acidic colour blends and very basic screenprinting prowess, coupled with the 'non-gallery' siting of the work engenders a social context for the work. The use of the public wall sets the work firmly in the context of the ordinary. Posters and placards displayed in areas common to fly-posting become part of the everyday, their absurd statements hidden in plain view. In a letter sent to Lynda Morris just prior to installation of the work and in support of his fluid approach, Deller says:

"Dear Lynda, ...the images on the posters will range from the Beatles, Fans, Teddy Boys etc. As far as I can see the content will not be offensive even to the average citizen of Norwich."

And he goes on to say:

"...because of the large nature of the project and the fact that all the work is new and will have to be specially made for the project I know I will exceed my initial budget of £100. Half the posters will be silkscreened by myself and the rest are going to be A0 photocopies"

A year later, in EAST 1996 selected by Richard Long and Roger Ackling, the artists Plamen Dejanov and Svetlana Heger utilised a row of half-size billboards adjacent to the Norwich School of Art & Design buildings to present a combination of oddly provocative objects and flat areas of colour. As with the Deller posters in the previous year, the use of public space and recognised commercial print format engender a sense disjuncture between the everyday and the unexpected or unusual. It works because it is printed matter. In terms of negotiation and liaison with the council and other organisations, the project, though modest in some respects raises significant challenges, evident from the correspondence found in the archive.

Between 1995 and 2000 there was very little print in the EAST shows. Photography is evident in works such as Louise Short's collection of 35mm transparencies of dead spiders, a series of Robert Henderson black and white works and Zarina Bhimji's haunting large scale colour prints of childhood locations revisited in Uganda.

2001 selected by Mary Kelly and Peter Wollen featured a display of very large unframed camera obscura prints by Heike Klussman, a minute lightbox with colour transparencies by Esteban Pastorino and a vast installation of colour photographs and digital prints on paper strewn across the entrance to the art school building.

By 2003 EAST had outgrown the space of the vacant studios and in response a number of EAST*off-site* events and projects took place in venues around Norwich. At this same time Andrew Hunt joined the gallery staff working as assistant curator and introduced his Slimvolume poster publication as the first EAST*additional* project. Slimvolume was an annual limited edition print publishing project started in 2000 by Hunt as a collaborative, supportive and democratic forum for artistic expression. Slimvolume was already successful with its first incarnation featuring in *Make it Happen* in Copenhagen and at the Kunsthall Rooseum in Malmo. The first

Slimvolume poster publication followed in 2001 and was shown at the Austrian Cultural Forum, London, Sparwasser HQ, Berlin, and konst-ig, Stockholm. The second issue of Slimvolume Poster Publication was launched in 2002 at Vilma Gold in London. Slimvolume poster publication 3 featured work by all of the 30 artists showing in EAST 2003.

Neo Rauch and Gerd Harry Lybke were the selectors of EAST 2004, and it is in this year that EAST multiples are introduced. The limited edition prints representing 5 of the artists exhibiting in EAST sold through the gallery at relatively low cost, making it affordable to purchase an original artwork from the exhibition. For the main exhibition, Christiane Baumgartner an artist who uses print extensively in her practice, displays a series of meticulously executed large-scale woodcuts of images taken from autobahn overhead CCTV cameras and one even larger (approximately 150cm x 350cm) image of B52 supply planes held on an airforce runway. In these works, the mechanically precise horizontal cut line imitates the function of a CRT TV screen, scanner or plotter, resulting in an intense surveillance-like photo-mechanical woodcut print. The contrasts between the imagery and the technique call into question issues around the truth of a photographic image and also reference the tradition of German woodcut printing. For EAST multiples Baumgartner produces a smaller work called *Shack* which is only 37cm x 55cm, the result being a work that exaggerates the visual obstacle of low resolution. Three other artists who are commissioned to make prints for EAST multiples are painters. Rose Wylie, known for her large un-stretched canvases of figurative imagery produces *Pop Witch*, a four colour screen print. Hurvin Anderson contrasts his limpid paintings of suburban fringes with an etching of relaxed geometric intersecting lines entitled *Welcome: Addition*. Christoph Ruckhaberle's screen print *Sex* closely relates to the large naïve cartoon-like paintings of hapless characters in city streets. Anja Schrey uses coloured pencil on paper to render cool hyperrealistic portraits and for EAST multiples she has one of her drawings scanned and digitally printed.

Schrey's print is the only work that encroaches on reproduction rather than original print.

What is significant about the EAST *multiples* is the degree to which the editioned prints offer manifestations of the works exhibited in the main show, paralleling the artist's imagery and making the democratic distribution of the work possible. Morris explains that "*The democratic idea of EAST meant that we were always interested in print, multiples and giveaways*". The social context and democratic potential for art has been present in all of the projects that Morris has worked on. This emanates from her visits to Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in pursuit of alternative models of art praxis, research conducted for her thesis at the RCA in 1973. Whilst Morris was teaching at the Slade in the 1970s she came into contact with Jonathan Miles and became interested in the political ideas of The Poster Workshop. The Poster Workshop, which operated out of a basement in Campden Town up until 1970 made screenprint posters at low cost for numerous groups that represented socially conscious ideologies. Through this it is clear to see how Morris identifies the poster as important, something between mass production and the unique.

Gustav Metzger, the sole selector of EAST in 2005 provocatively announced that "*this will be the art exhibition without any art*". Indeed in this EAST, performance, documentation and the use of communication media prevailed in place of the cultural commodity. The Norwich Gallery office was converted into an Internet broadcast facility, becoming the heart of the event. Print was inculcated into the fabric of Metzger's EAST with projects such as Jonathan Pierce's carrier bags, T shirts and printed ephemera and also David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan's giveaway comic book *Plastique Fantastique* which attempts to explain Post-Structuralist theory. In this EAST, the rise of the Internet and along with it the enduring potency of printed material came across strongly. Kennardphilips (Peter Kennard and Cat Picton Philips) merge both of these mediums, the power of web-based dissemination of

material and the power of the printing press. In their occupation of the sculpture studio basement, a space with concrete ceilings, ducting and conduit and no natural light, Kennardphilips established a temporary underground press. Internet access, image/text editing software and large format digital printing presses combined with tables, chairs and sofas to afford a space in which ideas could be exchanged, discussed and materialised as posters, pamphlets and flyers. The success of this project was measured by the number of visitors and students that spent considerable time engaging with it through dialogue, actions and physical outcomes. In their initial proposal submitted to EAST Kennardphilips state:

“The aim of this work is to create a network and infrastructure to enable citizens from all places to express and unite their opinions against war”.

Kennardphilips' project for EAST is a working example of Kester's socio-political integration. Especially as so many of the visitors to EAST were not necessarily conversant with contemporary art and its rules. Numerous members of the public emerged from the art school basement with printed material that they had co-authored in response to the dialogue with Peter Kennard and Cat Picton Philips.

Lynda Morris talks excitedly about the energy that Kennardphilips generated through their project. She relates the notion of the affordable printing press to her involvement in showing Seth Siegelau's *Xerox Book* for the first time in UK in 1970 and states *“The Xerox book is immensely important and even more so with the Internet and Wikileaks etc.”* Morris recognises the potency of print as a material manifestation of social dialogue and ideas. This reinforces both the social and democratic premise that she has adopted throughout her career and the framework upon which EAST was established.

Jeremy Deller teamed up with Dirk Snauwaert to select EAST 2006 in what unsurprisingly resulted as an eclectic and catholic exhibition. A number of

limited edition multiples are commissioned for 2006. Nate Harrison produced *Can I get an Amen?* a 12" vinyl record in an edition of 50, an extension of the installation in the main part of the exhibition. Jarrett Mitchell's *The Dawn of The Birth of The Battle of The Right To Life vs The Law of Death* is an unlimited photo-litho poster available at £5. Jeremy Deller designed a canvas tote bag with an image of the Lord Mayor of Norwich printed in purple. Also available was a series of limited edition photo-litho posters depicting images from 5 of the artists in the exhibition.

Matthew Higgs and Marc Camille Chaimowicz selected EAST 2007, a show as eclectic and disparate as 2006. 5 artists are commissioned to produce printed multiples for EASTwork, Tasha Amini produced a striking black and white lithograph to complement her paintings, Sara MacKillop made 2 digital prints that extend the references to vinyl records and playing cards in her practice, Josh Shaddock developed a piece of text into a photo-litho print and there are posters made of works by Steve Dowson and Luke Fowler. A powerful piece of work in the main exhibition was an installation of digital prints, posters and found printed material by Clunie Reid. Occupying the stairwell of the nineteenth century purpose built school of art, the seemingly random selection of advertising images, press photographs and other 'street' ephemera casually adhered to the walls with black electrician's insulating tape, imparts a sense of dialogue between otherwise unrelated things. The potency of print and the language of the 'paste up' draws into play the social language of the public wall, complete with overlays of hand written text emulating public commentary.

In 2007 it was agreed that EAST would be delivered on a biennial basis. In order to maintain momentum between exhibitions, it was agreed to establish a series of EASTprojects, using the Norwich Gallery as the base. The aim was to enable students and graduates the opportunity to work alongside artists that had in some way been associated with EAST, an idea emanating directly from Lynda Morris' experiences in Vancouver and Dusseldorf. Roger

Ackling undertook the first EAST*project* in February 2008 and Clunie Reid EAST*project 2* in May 2008. Working with 9 BA Fine Art students from Norwich University of the Arts, Reid successfully generated a creative activity in the Norwich Gallery that aligned with her own speculative process of arranging and reconfiguring appropriated or 'found' printed material.

'*Now is an interesting moment at which to be an artist*' is a quote from the first page of EAST*book EASTinternational 2009*, a publication that comprehensively charts EAST throughout its 18 years. The '*interesting times*' referring in part to the financial upheaval of the 2008 financial crash and the viability of capitalism as a continued fiscal model. The selectors for the final EAST, were Lukasz Gorczca and Michal Kaczynski from Raster gallery in Poland with Michael Baldwin and Mel Ramsden from Art & Language. Inviting Raster gallery was an orchestrated attempt to attract proposals from eastern European countries and in so doing, to detect the signs of artists offering alternatives to the old world order. In the exhibition there were numerous examples of works that utilised print and printed material in such a way as to conjures a sense of numbness, loss or amnesia. John Russell's massive vinyl wall hanging of a digitally engineered fantasy landscape managed to engulf the viewer in a promise of warmth and yet offer nothing tangible, instead revealing the empty promise of a utopian dream. In *Found Time (Big Ben)* Elizabeth McAlpine collected numerous examples of postcards depicting the exact same view of Big Ben with Boadicea's chariot in the foreground, each postcard differing in minute ways such as colour balance and cropping, the result being a diminishing of an iconic view of power and heroism. Marlene Haring's full size billboard poster *Because Every Hair is Different* in which a young woman appears entirely covered in long blonde hair, adopts advertising techniques in a disquieting manner. Adam Burton's *Acceptable Answers* takes content from the Green Party's manifesto and responds in text works produced by using a rubber stamp on found greyboards, the result being a visually crude and fugitive rendering of thoughts and dialogical retorts.

Prior to EAST 2009 Adam Burton was asked to undertake EAST *project 4*, which took place in February 2009. Working with 10 students, Burton transformed the Norwich Gallery into a publishing facility, using cut wooden type and a 19th Century Albion press. The content is generated through discussion and the wooden type assembled and printed. The Norwich Gallery was filled with the smell of oil-based printing ink and the walls were adorned with simple sheets of printed text proclaiming such things as 'WE HAVE NOTHING TO SAY'.

Over its 18 years of operation, EAST provided a platform for both established and emerging artists to present their practice outside of the normal conduits of artworld power and influence. The distinct characteristic of each EAST was due largely to the fact that the selectors were always different and in so ensuring that no hegemony dictated the direction of artistic ideology and throughout its 18 years it functioned as a barometer for emerging artistic practice. Morris aimed at attracting applications from regionally, nationally and internationally located artists. The social experience was an imperative in EAST, with the installation weeks providing occasions for lunches, curries in the evenings and fish and chips on the Norfolk coast. Opening nights were, not surprisingly a prolonged affair. The social aspect that Morris engendered did much to ensure the consistent interest of young artists. On the initial planning of how EAST would be installed Morris states "*...the social aspect was very important. We would pay travel expenses and put people up. It was very important that artists attended*".

There is a strong element of the 'social' and the 'art of encounter' in all that occurred under the banner of EAST. This is largely due to Lynda Morris' openness to the myriad ways in which artists make and communicate their work and a desire to encourage new thinking and practices. It is also evident that print process and indeed all other methods of mechanical reproduction played a critical role in EAST throughout its 18 years.

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