

Exhibition Proposition: We are the Energy!

Helen Smith www.helensmith.co.uk

Preview | 29th September 2-5pm. Tuesday 2nd October – Saturday 13th October 2012

Lang Byre Gallery, Woodend Barn. Opening times: Tuesday – Saturday Noon – 4pm

Helen Smith presents a new artwork, FOLD as part of her current PhD research into the nature and potential of creativity, provoked by the presence of an artist, for organisational and community environments such as Woodend Barn.

FOLD proposes to the community at Woodend Barn that **We are the Energy!** and that we consider this through the experience of folding sheets together. This action is a metaphor for creativity concerning art as experiences folded simultaneously across our planes of perception; sensory, emotional and intellectual.

Helen Smith says “FOLD is an experience gained through a familiar domestic action in a public location with friends and new acquaintances. It asks how might we recognise these experiences and understand their potential implications for our wellbeing and the health and sustainability of our communities?”

The exhibition includes a publication, a painting and a documentary film. A parallel exhibition at Gray’s School of Art presents an ‘exploded’ version of the publication made specifically for the 16meter long sculpture department project space found on the ground floor of the art school. <http://www.rgu.ac.uk/areas-of-study/subjects/art-and-design> 2nd October - 13th October 2012.

The publication is an artist book, published for the exhibition by Woodend Barn and includes text by Helen Smith and photography by Anke Addy www.ankeaddy.com Price £5. The painting, ‘A Life Together’ 2012 explores ideas of folding and creativity through it’s materiality and construction. The documentary film, “The Pool of Information” (1993), directed by Jini Rowling with extracts from ‘The Centre Film’ (1947) by Paul Rotha. discusses the Peckham Experiment (1926-1950). This was an experiment in family & community health led by Doctors Scott Williamson and Innis Pearse. They are recognised as having identified that an individual, family and communities leisure time was the most significant moment for effecting the environment in which they could affect their long-term health and wellbeing. <http://thephf.org>

1.

Let’s dance! If not, dance, then let’s fold cotton sheets together.

Lifting a folded sheet from the top of one of two piles of sheets and asking another person to unfold the sheet with you.

Offering them 2 corners and fully unfolding the sheet.

Then, folding the sheet up again. Doing this together, and on finishing, putting it on top of the opposite pile of sheets.

Doing this as many times, and with as many people, as you have time and energy for.

2.

“ One day they were folding sheets, air dried from the line. Suddenly, as if to herself, but loud enough to hear, her mother said, ‘This is the only thing you need two people for.’ They carried on in silence. Stretch wide (arms not long enough yet, Martha), up, grip at the top, drop the left hand, catch without looking, stretch sideways, pull, over and again and catch, then pull, pull (harder Martha), then across to meet, up to Mummy’s hands, down and pick up, one last pull, fold, hand it over and wait for the next....When they pulled, there was something which ran through the sheet which wasn’t just pulling the creases out..., it was more, something between them...Was that always there?” Julian Barnes, 1998.

Who will take a moment to remind themselves what it is like to fold a sheet with someone else? Who will we share this experience with? Will we do it again together or with someone else? Will we follow the guidelines or invent our own? What will we learn?

3

Woodend was a working farm on the Leys Estate owned by the Burnett’s of Crathes, located 17 miles west of Aberdeen between Crathes and Banchory, and where, in 1992, an inspirational group of people came together to make a community play. This shared experience is significant because it was the catalyst for establishing Woodend Barn, and it’s evolution through the energy and participation of a community drawn to its ethos of nurturing and celebrating creativity.

A group of volunteers initiate the visual art at Woodend Barn, and manage the programme and gallery with support from volunteer stewards and Barn staff. With the appointment of the Barn’s first Director in late 2011, the gallery programme is entering a period of development. The Gallery committee sit alongside similarly motivated groups with interest in music, film, gardening, and good food.

As artist in residence I have moved through the formal and informal networks of the organisation. This approach has allowed me to be active and reactive to the gallery programme and organisational development including; devising and chairing a development event for directors, staff, friends of The Barn and volunteers; supporting Evelyn Farquharson an artist based in Banchory, who graduated from Gray’s School of Art in 1960, in lending her work from the art school collection and working with her, the committee and the stewards through the process of the exhibition. I have lived in Banchory for this year and have regularly walked every route I can identify across the town and out to Woodend. Most significantly, I have spent time with a group of people. It is with this knowledge, gained through this particular experience that FOLD is made.

FOLD aims to encompass life at The Barn as I have experienced it. It is made through a process of collaborating with artists, stewards, colleagues and friends; activating, the physical environment of the gallery and its relationship to the theatre, concert hall, office, restaurant, wild garden and allotments.

FOLD is a conversation, in which, we merge with one another yet emerge clearer, more distinct or strengthened through the experience.