

The Body Politic

Social and Ecological Justice, Art, Activism

Run by PLATFORM at Arnolfini, Bristol
as part of *C Words: Carbon, Climate Capital, Culture*
October - November 2009

"It's not an ego trip, it's serious, it's politics, it's economics, it's everything. And art in that instance becomes so meaningful both to the artist and to the consumers of that art"

Nigerian writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1994; executed 1995

What makes you want to act for justice?

Racism? Climate change? Poverty? the price of food?

Are you looking for new creative ways to make change happen?

Do you want to study how to work better together?

This course is designed for people who want to study how social justice, the environment, arts and activism work together. Whether you're concerned about local, national or global issues, we investigate how creative approaches and collaborations combined with research can make your work more compelling, politically effective and also sustainable. This is also a chance to reflect on your own position and experience, think about where you are, and how you want to proceed. This course will give you a grounding in the fertile and sometimes difficult relationships between campaigning, art, activism, power, and action. Learning is done through sharing ideas, creative workshops, and visiting speakers. The course is very flexible and responds to the needs and desires of the group.

The Body Politic is run by interdisciplinary group PLATFORM, as part of *C Words: Carbon, Climate, Capital, Culture*, a two-month season of events and exhibitions at Arnolfini, Bristol 3.10.09 - 29.11.09; www.arnolfini.org.uk

Dates:	Wednesdays 14, 21, 28 October, 4, 11, 18, 25 November
Fees:	£90 full, £45 concs
Enrol:	www.arnolfini.org.uk ; Box Office 0117 917 2300
Led by:	Jane Trowell (PLATFORM) and other contributors www.platformlondon.org

Teaching and Learning Methods:

Short talks, discussion, workshops, groupwork, pairwork, off-site visits, participants' presentations, exercises, feasts...

By the end of this course you should be able to:

- feel more confident and articulate about your own politics and your social, cultural position
- gain an understanding of, and the links between the arts, community activism, campaigning, environmentalism, human rights, cultural work, policy making and education.
- engage more critically with the spectrum of world politics, its power imbalances and underlying economic structures.

- examine how you can engage more fully in social and ecological justice work.
- gain a greater understanding of the value of interdisciplinary working through structured discussions and participatory workshops.

The course will help

- provide grounding in the fertile and sometimes difficult relationships between campaigning, art, activism, personal development and action.
- develop a critical awareness of social, cultural, economic, political and ecological issues.
- equip you with the written and verbal skills to better articulate your position in relation to politics, activism and ecology.
- understand how working collaboratively contributes to the development of the wider body politic.

Course Content:

1. 14th October

Inner Ear: Introductions; political and artistic “epiphanies”. Listening to ourselves as a basis for any act of creation; learning to trust ourselves; and under what circumstances do we stop listening?

2. 21th October

Outer Ear: what matters to us? who are we listening to? Or *not* listening to? Listening to places and communities, invisibilities, biases, prejudices.

3. 28th October

Legs: experiencing through being there. Whose place is it? Walking real landscapes and cityscape - out and about in Bristol, and FEAST.

4. 4th November

Frontal Cortex and Solar Plexus: the limitations/possibilities of using facts alone to effect change; connecting information to experience, and going beyond the rational.

5. 11th November

Heart and Sex: where is the drive to do this work? What is ‘activism’ feeding off? Is there a blinding “ecstasy of protest”? What role does sensuality, pain and love play when working on difficult and distressing issues? How do we take care?

6. 18th November

Tongue: how do we speak? and how do we learn to speak together? the use of silence and the use of speech; articulation and silence as political danger.

Sat 21st November: special Body Politic events (see below)

7. 25th November

Benevolent Viruses: what can collaborative practices uniquely bring to this work; cooperation and solidarity; how do we find each other? how do we begin to work together and how do we keep going?? The importance of networks.

And final FEAST

SAT 21st November : *Two events on art, activism and education:*

5-Year Body Politic gathering, 12 - 3pm

A get-together for participants in the Body Politic courses, past and present. (Closed to public) What have we learnt, where did it take us, and how should the course develop?

Art, Education & Activism, 4 - 6pm

PLATFORM, Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination, Trapese, and DIY6

"Education involves ethics and aesthetics hand in hand..." said Brazilian radical educator Paulo Freire. A discussion, in the context of the C Words courses, workshops and experiments.

Some Reading

- Becker, Carol, (1994) *The Subversive Imagination*, New York: Routledge
Boal, Augusto, (1979) *The Theatre of the Oppressed*. New York: Urizen Books. Reprint Routledge Press, New York/London, 1982.
Felshin, Nina, (ed) (1995) *But is it Art ? The Spirit of Art as Activism*, Seattle: Bay Press
hooks, bell, (1994) *Teaching to transgress, Education as the Practice of Freedom*, London and New York: Routledge
hooks, bell, (2003) *Teaching Community, A Pedagogy of Hope*, Routledge
Kester, Grant (1998) *Art, Activism and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage*, Duke University Press
McKay, George, (1996) *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance Since the Sixties*, London: Verso
Papanek, Victor, (1995) *The Green Imperative: Ecology and Ethics in Design and Architecture*, London/New York: Thames and Hudson
Roy, Arundhati, (2003) *War Talk*, South End Press
Roy, Arundhati, (2004) *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, South End Press
Said, Edward W (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage (UK)
Sardar, Ziauddin, (2004) *Desperately Seeking Paradise, Journeys of a Sceptical Muslim*, Granta
Saro-Wiwa, Ken, (1995) *A Month & A Day*, London: Penguin
Shiva, Vandana (20087) *Soil not Oil - Climate Change, Peak Oil and Food Insecurity*, Zed Books
Solnit, Rebecca, (2000) *Wanderlust, a history of walking*, London and New York: Penguin
Solnit, Rebecca, (2004) *Hope in the Dark, Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, Penguin

Art, Activism, Social, Environmental Change: Websites of collective action

- www.alaplastica.org.ar
www.apsolutno.org
www.artnotoil.org.uk
<http://greenmuseum.org>
www.guerillagirls.com
www.appliedautonomy.com
<http://ev-eon.com>
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www.sarai.net
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www.stencilrevolution.com
www.temporaryservices.org
www.thevacuumcleaner.co.uk
www.theyesmen.org
www.trapeze.org
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