

Transcript: More things can happen than will, or have



Neil Cummings

Well, I'm so, sorry that I can't be there with you tonight

Chris probably explained, I'm having some upgrades fitted,

I can't even connect with you.

I thought the only thing to do, would be to record a diarydoc.

so, here I am

Thanks so much for Chris and Marsha for inviting me to contribute to the centenary celebrations

Chris suggested,.....given my age.....and my long, long involvement with Chelsea, that I perform a live-thread recall.

I'm a little out of practice,.....but I'll do my best.

So,..... I'm going to disconnect from Composite now

OK, I'M PRESENT

And, in keeping with the 'old-school' nostalgia of these face-2-face centenary celebrations,
I'd like to invite you, to do the same too.

Could you all just,..... also,..... disconnect.

Thanks

Well, you'll appreciate as with all live-thread recalls, this will be partial and flawed.

The thread I'll be re-running - again it's Chris' suggestion - is the recent development of the Chelsea Cluster

I thought a good place to start..... Well,..... as good as any
would be in 2'06, when the - then - Chelsea College of Art and Design
relocated

OK. I'M LIVE

2006

So **Chelsea College of Art and Design** moved into the former Army Medical College,next to Tate Britain, on Millbank, in London.

The logic was to condense previously scattered sites

– design, fine art, post-graduates,um,... textiles - into one location.

The move was messy, nothing seemed to work, but we settled

Although now,.....now.....

Now, I remember the college immediately clustered with **Wimbledon** and **Camberwell College of Arts**, in south London.

As **(CCW)**

So we seemed to concentrate, and then immediately..... dissipate

And it was only about two years earlier, in 2'04,

that **Chelsea** had been one of the five constituent colleges of the newly formed University of the Arts London (UAL).

The University had,.....I think, morphed from the London Institute, into the largest Arts University.....

probably, in the world

2012

Well,.....

there were some dramatic changes

Maybe one of the most dramatic, was in 2'12, in January, the UK government increased university tuition fees to **£9,000** Old UK Pounds a year.

Overnight, it transformed public universities into private institutions
They were hollowed out

I could never have afforded to study
.....*so much for social mobility*

Conflicts seemed to concentrate in education, especially creative education

2015

Next, next I can recall

Well,

After years,..... really years, of debate and lobbying

- I could probably thread back to 1972 and the Tobin Tax proposal

Our first EU **Transaction Tax** was finally implemented

I remember the date because it was Basia's birthday,
we were in Asturias 17th August 2'15.

she was 26

The (then) European Commission, a network of Central Banks, and the International Monetary Fund

Introduced a blanket 0.5% micro-tax on speculative financial transactions

Instantly, it curbed the volatility of high-volume, feral, short-term trading

Arcane financial instruments were re-purposed to be socially productive,

And revenue began to flow from private speculation, into state treasuries....

It's the beginning of our fantastically well-resourced Public Museums, Galleries and Cultural Assemblies

Public education benefited too

2016

Although, to be honest,
we really began to be hyper-resourced in 2'17,
a year after the **-Art Auction Transaction Tax (AATT)** was
introduced.

AATT was a boutique, secondary art-market micro-tax.

Monies raised from the booming resale-market for - well, principally
paintings - but other art-artifacts too,

were used to resource primary sites of creativity;

creative education, not-for-profit assemblies, and emerging art
practices.

Skimming profit was just,well,a price we could no longer
afford.

we really needed to nurture the ecology

– *From a % 0.1 tax , something like 875 million Old- UK Pounds
were raised in the first year, more than double the Arts Council budget*

It was cruel, because almost at the same time
Arts Council England was disbanded.

The last straw..... was probably the unwinding of the 13 billion
overspend of the 2'12 London Olympics

The government was embarking on a round of pre-election cuts.....
I guess it was inevitable

2017

Well, if you will recall that in 2'17, Chelsea College of Arts, devolved from the UAL.

It wasn't easy.....but.....

Administrative and ideological strains were increasingly difficult to reconcile.....

AATT funds enabled the College to regain independent status, and offer free - at the point of access - truly creative education for all,

We quickly partnered with Open School East, the Papered Parlour - to benefit from their mentoring and development programme, some of the London FabLabs, to work with their maker-technologies, the MayDay Rooms....., and.....

I think, the Showroom too?

Oh, and with Fondation Gallery Lafayette, in Paris.

We started to move away from producing market assets, or celebrating the accumulation of attention, and began to re-imagine creative practice

Yeah.....we also began to experiment with our organisational, and administrative protocols..... we learnt **a lot** from Critical Practice,

..... on how to become a creative institution

Courses dissolved, pathways too,and the strange year structure

research vectors developed

In Cultures of Resilience, GNUcraft, I remember.....

into mnemonic practice..... and exhibitionary networks

2018

Clearly, a key event in the emerging 'Chelsea Arts Cluster',
was in 2'18 when we co-produced,
with the ICA and Canonical,
a reanimated *Cybernetic Serendipity* exhibition.

It marked the radical expansion in Chelsea's interest in
- what was then called - 'digital arts', or networked cultures

And we queried the source; the legendary *Cybernetic Serendipity*
exhibition on its 50th anniversary.

The 68' iteration is recalled as

*the first encounter between machine assemblies and exhibited
creativity*

The original curator, Jasia Reichardt -
Phwoow,.....she was about 85 then,..... but still very sprightly
opened the year-long research project

Machine assemblies,.....
processes: both analogue and digital,
were emulated through a variety of media ecologies.

What was remarkable,
Really remarkable, was that the project, wasn't simply historical,
or even archival,
it was productive and creative,..... generative even.

Cybernetic Serendipity initiated a whole new strand of recursive
research

that I guess, even this live thread recall is part of.....

2019

Some of the more enhanced of you might remember,

I think, probably inspired by the distributed assemblies of old-Spain's
15-M movement in 2'09,

And various *Occupy* initiatives;

Occupy cities, democracy, finance, Debt,Occupy
education, Museums,
oh, and even happiness,

And a network of events..... often recalled as an 'Arab spring',

a broad coalition of over 20,000 social enterprises, Labour and non-
governmental organizations,

from over 47 countries, began to network,
into what became by 2'19, the **Multitude**.

They associated in Madrid

It was the first major, global, civil society coalition. And scalable

2020

It was only a year later,
really?

A year later?

that the **Multitude** laid the foundation for **iCommons**
- one of the sources for composite

iCommons began as an index of all resources currently protected by
the GPL, or its derivatives

- *the GPL you might remember, had evolved from protecting FLOSS software in the 1980's,*
- *protecting it from property and enclosure,*

Anyway,

iCommons soon aggregated

All Free University, academy and college curricula,

All publically funded law, science, and medical research.....

Art and design research too

All plant, animal and bodily knowledge,

indigenous knowledge

Open Access publishing.....

The vast copyright and patent expired resources,.....

And Some enlightened public Museums, Libraries and Galleries
participated too.

- British Library, Library of Congress, National Archives, etc

They opened their collections, their archives and databases.

I recall the Chelsea Cluster had foundation status.

We began to assemble and protect a vast cultural commons.

Creativity was nurtured, and.....outside of property restrictions,
and some economies of attention,.....

unleashed on a scale previously unimagined.

Abundance and generosity, began to overwrite scarcity and
restriction in the political economy of creativity

2022

Although, in complete contrast,
In 2'22 the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation,
- with *Barclays Capital Management*
Issued the first Singularity Art Bond.

Additive manufacturing was developing at an extraordinary speed,
you could glimpse the future of nano technologies,
and wearables too

The Bond was issued in response to private investor demand,
Demand for greater access to singularity.....Greater security
singularity was dissipating,

The Guggenheim Foundation,
the Gazprom - Hermitage Museum, in Moscow,
The Azco-La Caixa Collection,
along with other Tier One private museums,

designated specific artworks in their collections as singular and guarantee they will never be imaged, scanned, recorded, exhibited, reproduced or loaned.

The market was soon linked to 125 collections with some 12.2 billion Old_US dollars, in play.

In the first quarter, the Bonds easily outperformed Treasury base. Private investment, and Sovereign Wealth funds piled in

2023

Oh, but this,
this was terrible,

Two years of drought,
in June 2'23 the Food Price Index spiked at 300 points,

violent protests spread across sub-Saharan Africa, in South Central Asia, and even in Europe

First, problems arose in the market for cereals - wheat and barley - although soon, rice and maize were affected.

Food security was exposed to extreme price volatility, similarly energy, and.....in Spain, even water.

Dark-pools were having terrible effects on the global precariat.

So, an index of prime resources was prepared by the UN_Multitude,
– I think we participated in the cultural goods commission

and firewalled from speculative trading technologies.

Commodities markets were limited to distribution,
– they were separated from speculation

I recall that..... the The Nutritional Commons was founded soon
after.

2025

If I remember rightly,
It was in September,
September 2'25 at the *iCommons* Governance Summit in São Paulo,
Brazil – that looked like such a fun summit,

It was Carnival, right?

Marsha and Claire, from the Chelsea Cluster participated in drafting
guidelines on Radical Transparency.

Radical Transparency, aimed to install accountability in governance,
and administration

in the operating systems of public institutions.....

Through processes, we completely take for granted now: -

Participatory assemblies, local working groups, public agendas,
published minutes; open budgets – for full financial disclosure -
resilience accounting, and so on

Previously, there had been a lot-of lip-service paid to 'openness' and
'participation',

Although usually this meant increasing numbers of customers,
students, voters or or visitors

The Radical Transparency guidelines formalized core values

and again, I'm proud to say, we were at root.

True participation, is transformational

2025

Transformational,

Like the the legendary

Ex Habere: The Practice of Exhibition in,

hmmm I think it was....um..... 2'25,

a three-year research project,

We uncompressed the Latinate root of exhibition, *ex habere*,
to reveal the intention of 'holding out' or 'showing' evidence in a legal
court.

Implicit in the genealogy of 'exhibition' is the desire to show, display
and share with others.

By cleverly grafting this ancient drive,
to contemporary desires for *creative co-production*,.....

to source, exchange and share, to generate non-rivalous resources
became vital to the constitution of resilient public institutions,

Ex Habere reaffirmed 'exhibition' as core to the Chelsea Cluster's
aspirations.

And those aspirations were amplified through-out the *iCommons* meshwork –

they replicated at an astonishing speed,

throughout civil society.

2026

In contrast, in complete contrast

The market for contemporary art, was struggling

Well no, not really struggling, like always,

it was buoyant at the top end, but prone to asset bubbles

The truth was, they had a dwindling supply of new Asset Backed Securities, especially singular assets, to originate, diversify and trade.

The Frieze Art Academy had opened in Shanghai

was it Shanghai, no,

no it was Beijing in 2'21

To address the lack,

There were conflicts of interest, firewalls installed, a 'light touch' regulatory structure, and no one seemed to mind

The Frieze Art Academy merged with **University of the Arts: Asia** in about 2'24

Although a couple of years later they were both subsumed by the giant Christies Group

2026

Anyway, I digress, the thing was.....

Ex Habere produced a whole new temporary community

we started working with regional institutions, the New Economics Foundation, Midlands Contemporary,..... Rachel at Common Gound..... and we began a self-reflexive critique of the 19th-century exhibitionary model.

Of course, a model we did so much to initiate, replicate and develop.

This 19thC exhibitionary - model, and..... its 20th C intensification, was obviously unsustainable,

It was a corporate model of a museum,..... gallery,.....or academy

Institutions had to constantly expand,

commission signature buildings,

evolve huge administrative hierarchies for:

Exhibition - Risk Management, Health and Safety, Widening Participation...

Education - Quality Assessment, Research Ethics, Development, Sustainability, Enterprise,

and so on, and so on.

To grow, exponentially

So in 2'26, the Cluster resolved to *institute* – in the ancient sense of the word,

of *founding and supporting*.....creative practices.

We began to re-think ourselves as a creative institution,
more fluid, porous, nimble,embedded..... lateral
less spectacular.

We began to play, risk,.....
co-operate, research and rapidly prototype – not only through
research exhibitions like *Ex Habere* -

but also with our organisational structure.

Some heritage values were lost – like nested committee structures,
or *line management* - and others produced, nurtured and cherished.

Like when working with *Intermediæ* in Madrid,
we learnt to invest, long-term, without regard to an interested
return.

We obviously devolved locally,

And also began to networked globally
With new partners -
the National Museums of the Americas in Brazil,
Ker Thiossane in Dakar, Senegal, - [on the AfroPixel project](#)
and at the Sarai Centre for Organic Architecture, at Ranchi, in the
fledgling Indian multitude

2028

Our new partners, they really enriched the cluster

for example, with Sarai,

That a team, led by Judy,Judy.....Judy Armitage.....

and Dil Ballal

they assembled a self-aware intelligent agent.

The first organic-synthetic assembly.....

The assembly was able to sense, self-direct, to learn, and act upon its environment.

the research was unveiled at the *Knowledge Exchange* on NanoAssemblies in October - just before my birthday - in 2'28, that we co-convened with *Sarai*

We were all stunned, but, the implications were clear

2029

We had to rethink our practices,

we began to recognized ourselves as an assembly of complex social process,

and that creativity was inherent in every conceivable transaction producing those processes.....

at whatever the intensity, and regardless of scale.

The huge challenge for everyone

Was to attend to the lines of force, the transactions, and not be dazzled by the subjects, objects or institutions they produced.

Transactional Aesthetics, enabled artists' to merge with other creative forces aggregated by the Chelsea Cluster.

into relations of mutual co-production.

Immanent, immanent to the logic of networks

2031

And then, in 2'31, in the blink of an eye
The spectacular roller-coaster ride of the Guggenheim Foundation
was over.

The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, the cluster in New York, Venice, Bilbao
and the Deutsche - Guggenheim in Berlin, together with the
unfinished projects in Shanghai, Rio and Moscow, were all,

taken into **UN-Multitude** stewardship.

The demise of the Guggenheim, the collapse of the Singularity
market , forced other private museums into stewardship.

They all filed for Chapter 12 protection.

It was a **spectacular** reverse of resource flows,
tens of thousands of art works poured into public collections from
previously private institutions.

An ethic of public generosity was re-animated, even encouraged.

Everyone benefited.

At about the same time, maybe a bit later, I think, about 2'33
Hydrocarbon use peaked, at something like,
..... 42.7 Gigatons.

Disinvestment in the teens,
the Ethical Rating Agencies, they **really** had an affect

2034

Phww.....talking of affects

Larissa,..... oh, Larissa

She said to me

“ We need to enact. To be more agent than immanent.”

Larissa was the Cluster’s fixed term executive,

that phrase stuck in my mind,

its from when she inaugurated the exhibitionary phase of *Operating System: Governance*

A two-year research thread into *exhibition* as a technology, and *immanence* as an institutional logic.

When the project concluded,

we realised the Chelsea Cluster needed radical revision.

We needed to add an executable function, to our research and exhibitionary core.

2035

It was also Larissa,

Who nurtured our sensitivity to trust

trust, circulating through logistical systems of attention;

systems of capture, accumulation, and distribution were producing new ecologies of value.

Attention is a vector, a force and a medium,

nothing moves outside of its sphere of influence;

To attend is to invest.

Its to invest in values not yet known; future, fugitive, contingent values.

Private interests, and residual retail culture strive to capture attention. They thrive on minimum, short-term, quantified, calculated investment.

Any long-term investment of attention, of trust and creativity, of love and generosity are always at risk.

Skirmishes break out, often escalating into local conflicts for the social currencies at play.

And no exchange
no matter how small, bodily and intimate,
or vast in volume and scale is possible without trust.

We command and redistribute trust and attention.

There's a responsibility in the cluster

I think here, right here, we began to develop an ethics of attention.....

Oh, this was great

Oh, this was really great

We co-hosted part of the the bicentenary celebration of the *1835 Select Committee of Arts and Manufactures*,

with the V&A

You can probably recall.

...that.....the Committee set in motion public creative education through a network of Government Schools of Design.

And, at the same time,..... they initiated local, public museum collections to 'educate' visitors to be more discerning consumers.

I think

Uhhhm.....I think.....Henry Cole was involved.....?

It was part of the recursive programming thread...

Imagine,..... two perfect institutions to support the 19thC Free Trade ideal.....

I loved the way the original committee was re-staged, as a live-event,

refracted through each of the clusters nodes.

It was more than nostalgia, much more

it was like running emulated source code, through a super-new assembly

2037

It reminds me of how we reverse engineered spectatorship, spectatorship

In the past, being a spectator meant looking at a spectacle.

It was like being a member of an audience - like the experience you're recuperating today.

And the act of spectatorship, looking,

- *ha, I remember the lazy term 'viewer' was endemic to art education,*
- *like an eye on a stick,and not even a desiring eyes*

it's the opposite of knowing or doing, it's a state without any power of intervention. No agency.

Being a spectator means being passive,
and it had dominated education, even creative education, and exhibitionary practice , for much of our recent history.

By 2'37, the affect of the Cluster's co-produced exhibitionary networks,
like *Operating System: Governance*,
our embodiment of the *Radical Transparency* guidelines,
access to the *iCommons* meshwork,
they all.....produced a tipping point.

Spectatorship was largely overwritten by **agency** and **engagement**.

And in turn, representation was replaced by co-presence.

Oh and this!

This! This I remember locally, its hard wired.
Even the date.

It's a seismic event,

The 6th February at the Ferguson Research cluster at the Manchester Open University.

an organic-synthetic assembly participated in the legendary *Turing Test*.

In an examination that lasted, like,..... three and a half hours?
a panel of human judges couldn't agree
on which of the participants was a human subject,

For the first time, an organic-synthetic assembly was credited with human-like intelligence.

An evolutionary firewall was breached

2039

I went to Brazil, it was my first time
It was so hot, hot and really humid

In October, yes....I think it was October

I went to visit the first in our series of ***Simpatia Buildings***,
in downtown Fortaleza, in the Ceará region.

Of course, it nestles sensitively in the local permaculture -
it used a lot of upcycled additive manufacturing techniques,

- like cococrete, an adobe and coconut fibre composite

But what was memorable for me, was that the building pioneered biotic responsiveness.

It senses emotional exchanges within and between visitors,.....

and responds

It was amazing, I remember an intense discussion with Carmen over the impact of urban farmsand the building responded.

Emotionally choreographed I'd say, although I'm not entirely sure how.....

2043

Well, what a great party, thanks!

Many of you were there, for the Jubilee Celebration of my involvement with Chelsea,

I'd given my first lecture, to what were then called undergraduates, half a century ago,.....

It was in Manresa Rd, in the lecture theatre,
It was probably about the parallel history of the public museum and the department store,..... or something like that

There were probably about 10 people there..... anyway
There was an Art History Department then,
Staffed by mathematicians, poets, artists.....philosophers

2047

Hmmm.....I guess..... traditional, academic philosophers

presuppose, an **already** constituted subject.

A conscious, self-present, sovereign individual in possession of private property, anterior to communal relations.

When we initiated *Almost Real: Composite Consciousness* -
in 2'47.

It was an exploration of logistical, distributed, or networked
contemporary self-presence.

Composite consciousness constituted the social identity of those
present, and those not.

And in this gap in presence - between those present, and those not

is the object, image, audio, archive, collection, database and meta-
data of memory..... shifting self-presence into the future, or re-
collecting the past into the present.

2049

I was only tangentially involved in *Almost Real*

But it probably lead me to be involved as advisor in 2'49,
to the Chelsea Agent cluster

We lobbied for a new Article to be added to the **UN-Multitude**
Declaration of Human Rights.

According to Article 6 of the **UN-MDHR**, all humans are persons under
the law.

But there is a philosophical and legal distinction between humans and
persons.

Humans are those that fall within the biological classification *Homo*
sapiens, whereas a person refers to those with certain traits or
characteristics.

I think it was Locke, was it John Locke.....

anyway

Organic-synthetic assemblies were approaching person-hood,
yet were clearly unable to enter the biological classification *Homo sapiens*.

The cluster petitioned to add a 39th article to the **UN-MDHR**,

extending human rights to appropriate organic-synthetic assemblies

2051

Oh,

Oh, no.

I see time is running out, so I don't have time to recount Chelsea's
part in the bicentenary of the Great Exhibition,

Anyway, many of you there will have participated.....

2054

Well, you all know, our Composite meshwork went live in 2'54.

All common data, information and knowledge, every common
archive, database, collection, and DNA storage device is accessible
live and in real time.

Extended by, and assembled by composite, our desires, investments,
and attentions produce new logistical populations,

arrayed in myriad networks of association, and concentrated in multiple locations –

of persons, institutions, assemblies, technologies, and geographies.

2056

Well, most of you would have been there.

What a great achievement for Chelsea. What an achievement

It could be our defining moment.....

So, you don't need me to remind you,.....but I will;

On the 19th October, our Cluster sponsored Article 39 of the **UN_MDHR**

extending rights to organic-synthetic assemblies..... was approved. And set in motion

What an achievement. Historic

You all deserve huge

huge Congratulations,

2063

Ok, that's it!

The local thread I've been running is out of time, its a good place to stop, and, I'm exhausted

we're more or less up to date.

Oh, I'm sure to have missed so much out.....

But today, throughout the Cluster, in all our intensities, we're celebrating.

Thank you **so** much for you attention,
We can look forward, with real anticipation, to the next fifty years

Please feel free to reconnect to Composite.

Enjoy the rest of the celebrations, I think there are drinks waiting for you

I hope to see you all soon

Hasta luego