



# NOWHERE NEAR A PROS ARCH: FRINGE, DEVISED, SELF INITIATED & COLLABORATIVE WORK

Jessica Worrall, Joanna Resnick, David Farley & Daniel Bye being interviewed by Emma Tompkins.

## Could you tell us a little bit about the People Show?

**Jessica:** People Show are a collective of performance makers who make up the uk's oldest experimental theatre company. The collective started in the 60's and were seminal in the formation of performance Art as part of the counterculture scene in the UK and I joined only a few weeks after graduating Nottingham Trent in 1990.

People Show work as a non hierarchical collaborative company, without the use of external directors. Our work is always devised from scratch and we describe it as 'The Sum of the imagination of the people in the room'. Whoever is in the room are the people who're making the work and the work reflects who those people are. The people may change but the process stays the same. All the elements, design, performance, sound, lighting, everything in terms of how you make a piece of work, are equal, and we devise together with all those elements as much as we can in the room at the same time. The roles are very fluid. The company has some of its original core members so the age range at present goes from Sadie Cook a theatre maker practitioner in her 30's to Saxophone player George Khan who's in his 80s, It's a wonderfully broad range of experience.

So as a designer within that company, I can go in with an idea for a show that I can offer up to the group (as a piece of work), and then we work on it collaboratively. The elements are interwoven together and this does come with problems, because often design wise, if you've got performers in the room they can generate material very quickly, whereas as a designer we all know that actually you need to go away and make something and bring it back into the room and suddenly the others might say 'we moved on from that' so a lot of it is based on trust, and based on the conversations that you've had. It's the kind of call and response you have to negotiate with the whole time. Because we don't have external directors and we don't have anyone whose role it is to be a director in the company we take it in turn, and we came up with the term 'Fascist for the day' and whoever it is that day is the one who says 'that's a bit shit'. It's really just a way to help us make decisions quickly that isn't collectively sitting in a group and just going around in circles for hours. Again it's about trust. But there's another analogy that we use a lot about how we make work which is that it's more like how you make a piece of music; we're more like a band. We are all individuals playing to our strengths but we are all also equally responsible for the overall direction or 'sound' of the work we are making. We also always trust that there's a moment where the piece of work tells you where or what it needs to be. The piece of work becomes the director.

## **If you're a designer entering an devised process and you don't have a full experience of that, what tips would you give?**

**Jessica:** I think the main one is not to be precious about ideas and things, something I learnt was when you design something and you're proud of it and present your vision and then the actors come and start changing things and they want different things and you can feel like 'there's nothing left of me there', but I think you have to have faith that if you get rid of something it doesn't mean it's a bad idea it means it's not the right idea for that thing you're working on at that point. So you can save it up and use it somewhere else. With devising you have to be able to let it go, you have to trust that you will come up with something better. It's also really important if you're being pushed for ideas to go 'I don't know yet, but I will know later on in the process'. Don't feel pressured to have to come up with something on the spot because you need to respect the creative process and the amount of time your creative process takes. A lot of the time we're put on the spot to come up with things and as a designer it can sometimes feel like you're there only as a problem solver or to facilitate what someone else wants. It's important to know you are there as an artist who is equal with everyone else, so you know the time you need to make your decisions.

## **In terms of what a non traditional venue might look like, we have Joanna Resnick, producer with Slung Low.**

### **Could you tell us a little more about Slung Low?**

**Joanna:** We are a theatre and community venue based in Holbeck, South Leeds, which has been going for a couple of decades and makes work in non conventional spaces; carparks, buses & trains and we also run the Holbeck, which is the oldest workings mens club in the country. If that wasn't all it continues to be a working mens club is also an open development space for artists to come and make work, receiving touring performances and running a cultural community college. With star gazing, south indian cooking to plastering as part of a pay what you decide curriculum. Our largest project to date was 'Flood', a 6th month project in collaboration with Hull City of Culture, a show in four parts; a short film made on a boat in the north sea and a outdoor performance spectacle were David Farley designed an incredible floating city in a 100m canal basin in a residential estate in Hull.

**David Farley, as well as being Slung Low's associate designer, has also worked in the West End & Broadway but says with total surety that by far the most exciting and rewarding is the work he gets to make with Slung Low.**

We also have a large community company as part of the show. There was a collaboration with the writer, and we built the show around the script. We worked with the community company who were part of the cast and were a very important part of the process.

## So how is slung low different to a regional theatre?

**Joanna:** Most of the work we create is outdoors or in non conventional spaces. We ended up finding and running a venue by accident, originally that was because the arts council wouldn't give us any more money before we grew up and had a proper office, and for the same amount of money as a swish office in the centre of the city, we could get 5 railway arches with a lot more space where we could be messier, and invite other artists to come and make work and overtime, that grew, and a lot of it was trying to be useful and kind in what we were doing. In January we moved into the Holbeck. When we make work as Slung Low, it's not traditional theatre that's our starting point; Staging a riot in your local theatre is very different to staging a riot on the steps of the town hall, which is what we did in January. It means something different, politically. There's a lot more freedom in finding different locations.

**David:** It's a lot easier to set stuff on fire when you're outside. There are things you can't really get away with in a building that are very natural outdoors! One of the things that slung low does very successfully is use headphone radio systems, so our audience wear a headphone receiver and are fed a live mix of the performance with a commissioned soundtrack and sound effects. So this allows us to have a bubble of audience in a public space where there might be other members of the public who aren't taking part in the show just wandering through, and you have this complete contact with that audience. And that does something very interesting dynamically to how you can present work and as a designer you have an opportunity to create worlds that get fleshed out with the audio but still have the backdrop of a city centre to play off at the same time.

**Joanna:** It's always part radio play half live action film happening right in front of you which means you can put people on top of tower blocks and there will still be people whispering in your ear. It means you can dominate public spaces without excluding people from those spaces and people can still come and go. When we were making the Flood in Hull we'd have kids walking past every day on their way to school and they'd see us in the build up of the show, and for them, for that ear, that's what a theatre company was. People experiencing the show before it's even made, and these are people who might never consider crossing the threshold of traditional theatre space. We talk about our shows as adventures rather than 'a play'.

We run the Holbeck as space that is open for people to use as and when they want, and we share both the resources, van & technical equipment with people who need it. So if you want to make work and you need a transit van, headphone equipment, all you need to do is get in touch with us, if you're passing Leeds and need a rehearsal space, we're here. In the making of the work, we have regular collaborators but we also make sure we involve new people in that process. People from the place we are working are always part of that, when we made Flood there were 100 people from the city involved in the creation of that show. So we do that in different ways and those relationships are found depending on the partner venue or the collaborators we are working with sometimes. It's a rich experience when you get that combination of citizen participation who are telling their story and those people who are dedicated to their careers and livelihoods to making excellent Art, and that together is really magic.

## David, how was your role different with *The Flood* than a traditional Design Role?

**David:** We always rehearse on the set, and it's often because there's no way we can find a space that's a traditional rehearsal space, so we build the set and so everyone knows what they're up to, so it's much more straightforward. We found the space for the Flood collectively, as a company, after looking any many sights around Hull, with just the embryo of the stories in place, and we found a location and thought this would allow us to do a lot of what we wanted, open up a lot of challenges, and with *Slung Low* shows I also act as a production manager alongside Alan as Director and Joanna, and we collectively production manage the show, and what that allows me to do is it gives me budget, and I will be allowed to spend that money however I want to, so there are priorities that will allow me to channel money into that element, or it might help me know I need to be much more creative about the way I might achieve something because there is only a certain amount of money there. I love getting my hands dirty, I came from a making background and so whenever I have the opportunity I love to get stuck in and there's absolutely an element of responding to a chosen place and when you're working out doors of how hard that can be. I'm not standing there as a designer saying 'that's gotta to be over there'. I'm in there, with the team saying 'sorry this is ridiculously hard to do but we're going to have fun doing it and there will be a big meal at the end of the day'.

That also morphs into stage manager/performer side of things, again responding to the environment and general public. Sometimes there's some really cool stuff to do like driving a floating car that has a flame thrower bolted onto the top of it.

**Joanna:** We're a really practical bunch, even before we'd settled on the site for Flood, we'd had lots of conversations back and forth about what it might be, we didn't know what it was going to look like or where it was going to be. The final part was only written somewhere between part 2 and 3 so David had to design an entire set that had to be radically transformed in some way for this final battle at the end of this epic four part adventure, and even before we knew the location we knew what we might need to do so as a team we went on a load of training together, and some of us learnt safety boat operation, some learnt rope access, we learnt how to telehandlers and jiggers knowing that we might end up with a flat piece of farmland where we might have to dig out the water space. But we actually found an almost audience ready site with the doc, but with all the training and the conversations back and forth, a lot of the show is created through those conversations, so much of it is in the doing of it as a team.

**And Finally we have Daniel Bye, who works mostly as a writer and a performer but also makes work as a director;**

**Tell us a little about your work.**

**Daniel:** I work in is small scale theatre touring, in relatively traditional spaces, which is certainly part of a tradition and increasingly it's been absorbed by a mainstream, although the work is often made in a collaborative way or a non traditional ways but there is also a strand of work that

is large scale participatory performance and to talk about one in particular, I did a show a few years back in Crimdon Dene, East Durham Coast, a huge glacial valley cut into the side of the coast line, and it was a show about the entire history of that place and the relationships have had with the place so it started with the process of engagement of communities to generate material for the show, and the final thing was a huge scale thing with a 80 strong community choir and a brass band leading people into the valley and a series of installation that were a backdrop to the performance part. There was a meal for everyone. These were all design considerations. Working on that kind of scale with that many bodies and designing the journey of moving that many bodies through a show was a fascinating process.

In a lot of theatre training there's an assumption that the director leads the process and everyone works to the director and that can be more or less collaborative and it can be more or less fascistic. It can enable everyone's creativity or it can stifle it, but there's a set of conventional structures according to which the work is navigated, and in the part of the sector that I work it not necessarily the case that the director is the lead artist, so I make a lot of small scale solo performance or small ensemble performance and I work in a corner of the sector that tends to be experimental and tends to be studio theatres and tends to be made in non traditional ways. Very often there is a director in those spaces but the director is not the lead artist.

So what will quite often happen is that the writer is the originating artist, but the director is the lead artist, and these are shorthand terms that might be more or less useful, but the writer might make a lot of creative decisions about the world of a show, the story, the way it unfolds, and then they will hand it over to a director who may or may not have any interest on what the writer thought or whether or not they remain alive, and the director will have a set of overlapping responsibilities as to the realisation of the world, including working with the designer and other members of the creative team. In my work, I tend to work with a director, but the director isn't in charge, the director will run the rehearsal room and make the suggestions you would normally expect of a director, but the impulse for the project and the final set of decisions will come from me.

It's guess its a way of working that emerged from solo performance artists aggregating around them a wider team who help them deliver on that, and that might be about delivering that solo performance artist's vision from the muses, or it can be quite a collaborative process where everyone is working together to create a show out of this set of original impulses.

I really enjoyed what Jess was saying about creating an environment where a show can happen, that's a big part of every one of my projects is thinking about the space in which the show happens, it's something that the designer absolutely has to bring in collaboration with what the lighting designer brings, or what the director brings or what I bring as someone who brought the original idea, but wants everyone else to bring what they've got to that as well.

## How does work go from an idea you have, to seed funding to R&D to associate artists to perhaps the Fringe or another performance level?

**Daniel:** There are probably as many answers to that as there are shows and I can only speak for works for me, I'm wary of speaking for a whole sector, so my work will tend to be created and commissioned in ways that aren't radically different than ways you see as conventional. So I will usually have work commissioned by a theatre or a consortium of theatres. Me and my producer, when there's an idea we want to realise, we will usually be approaching theatres to see if they a) want to support the idea and b) are able to support it and then that consortium of theatres is the starting point for what then becomes the show. It's usually arts council funded, is the short answer. But there's a real distinction here that it's not that there is a script that is commissioned that is then moved to production or not moved to production according to the decision of an Artistic Director. What will be commissioned from me is the whole show and the development of the design runs in parallel with the development of the design concept, in which I include lighting design, sound design, it all runs in parallel with the whole dramaturgy. So quite often, in fact always, the text is the last thing to be finished, especially when it's a solo performance, because I can change the text without it confusing anyone else.

## What does the relationship with the designer look like in this case?

**Daniel:** It becomes a three way process, because in my solo shows I'm not usually the director in this process, and there might be a director designer relationship be a relatively closed conversation whereas in a process where I'm writer/performer the director is part of that conversation, alongside the lighting designer and the dramaturg as well, so the whole production concept is all working together, and what that often means is that it can take a bit longer, collaboration is slower than dictatorship and that usually leads to things which are more fully realised and where all elements are working together towards the same goal.

**Emma:** You can't work collaboratively in a straight line.

## QUESTIONS SENT IN

### How do you initiate projects and secure funding?

**Joanna:** Our projects come from all sorts of different places. Sometimes it's an idea we have as a team, and it's a question of working out who might be best positioned to go along that journey with you and who might be interested in supporting that process. Sometimes there are people who approach you (Slung Low) because they want to achieve something specifically in a space or a city or time and together you come up with something that addresses what it is they are looking for. We did a project with the RSC and we pitched them so many shows but it was in conversations with David about how we might consider treating space differently that the new project developed, so it was very different from the traditional shows we'd been doing. A lot of the

shows we make are pretty similar budget wise to a show at your local regional theatre. It's just the way we use the money and the way we approach the project is a little different.

What I would suggest if there's something that you're really itching to do, find people who are equally excited about it and make it happen. So much at the moment is changing and shifting and hopefully it's an opportunity for those who might have felt excluded in the traditional theatre Systems to come forward to make a claim. Things are happening, people are making work and all over this country people are creating Art and Culture and you can find ways to do that by gathering a team around you. I would keep an eye on the Arts Councils latest announcements because they are currently revealing how they are going to distribute the next big pot of money from the government.

**Jessica:** It reminded me of Shunts work, they started from the ground up, they were fresh out of college and they were a group of people with a common goal and a common mind set to shake things up. I think as Joanna was saying they found an old building, and approached the council who leased it to them and their funding most likely came from Grants for the Arts where you can apply for some research and development money for ideas. So if you can get a space, or work with a council to use any spaces that are empty that they would be happy for people to be working in, because there are so many disused spaces. It's a case of don't wait for someone else to instigate the work, to ask you, you will know people who do all the other roles you need (technicians, lighting design etc) and it gives you that impetus. Don't wait for directors to ask you, don't wait for a company, form your own!

**Emma:** All the work I've co produced has been council funded, we've found the schemes online and they will have departments with entertainment/performance/community budgets allocations. You can access them, they are more likely to go to the arts organisations that they know exist, but they will put open calls out and sometimes there are pockets of funding. I pitched to them with a director with an idea and that started a three year working relationship that meant we made really experimental community projects. But I became a producer as part of it, because you have to, and it's something that I didn't get as part of my training, I didn't know what an arts council application was and it was only from working next to a producer was I able to understand this process. There is a missing chunk of designers knowing how to make our own work and where to access that info. But the tide is turning, the idea of a design led project is coming up again and again and it is becoming a recognisable concept, and designers can push, we just need the information to unlock the process of how to do it.

**SPEAKING OF WHICH** - There is a SBTD guide to writing funding applications, available [here](#).

### **Where do you start creating work that's designer led / devised?**

**Emma:** If you see work being made with artists who have trained or worked in the European Theatre Arts style, it's a good start: schools like Gaulier or Le Coq in Paris and Lispa before it closed. The European style evolved to be more of the outside eye collaborative theatre model and i've worked with directors in traditional roles who've trained at Le Coq and i've found my relationship with them has been predominantly more collaborative, so the training of the people

you're working with will pre determine a sense of how they like to work. Also, declaring yourself as a collaborative designer, because 'collaborative' is a green light to people who like to work in a certain way. How you present yourself when you are meeting other theatre makers, especially if they call themselves a 'theatre maker' is another hint that they are someone who might want to work more collaboratively.

**Daniel:** The border question is regardless of which element of practise you come from, the question is about initiating projects and getting them off the ground:

It is of value to have multiple ideas on the boil, because you never know which of them is going to catch its moment. You almost certainly can't get a thing going on your own energy, so you need to find collaborators for whom that moment is a match, and producing partners for whom that idea sets something alight. The Price of Everything was a side project whilst I was trying to get a different project off the ground. But no theatre was interested at the time and in the meantime there was an idea that I was musing on and every time i spoke to a producer or a theatre about and their reaction to the main project was always less then when I mentioned the Price of Everything, so I had to believe them. So I started to amass a team around that project because the world was telling me there was heat. It started out as a bit of a hobby but it was the first thing I made as a writer performer, my first solo show and 9 years on that is still what I do and it is what I've become known for. My whole career changed in response to what the world told me was a more urgent idea and way of working. I urge all of you to remain open to what the world is telling you. Have multiple ideas on the boil and mass collaborators about that.

And in terms of finding those collaborators, It's a process of talking about things and seeing if your minds meet over them. The way minds meet and think together is of paramount importance, portfolio is always less important than the relationship. The work happens in the space between the artists involved. Any given performance happens in the space between the performer and the audience.

### Questions from the audience

**I'm particularly passionate about outreach and engagement work as community work, it's the front line in helping to facilitate a more diverse and inclusive sector, one of the issues I've found is the industry sees this work as separate or less value than 'Professional theatre', do you agree with this and if not how do we tackle this:**

**Emma:** When we start to recover from what it is we're going through, it is the outreach and the participation work that is going to help communities heal. It's such a hugely important part of the industry and the talk of 'Crown Jewels' means that I worry that work will be lost and not prioritised.

**David:** The community elements of the work with Slung Low is the most enriching part of the job and the work with the community makes it far more valuable than the more prestigious work that I get involved with. By doing more of it, supporting more of it will grow.

**Joanna:** The snootiness definitely exists, but I think there is a shift happening? The Arts council released their 'Lets Create' strategy, which was quite a shift for them, as whilst there's still a focus on artistic excellence there's a real drive towards relevance, and I suppose the pandemic makes that hit home much more. Slung low are currently operating as the ward lead for social care referred in south leeds, we don't see a distinction between that work now and the work we were doing before hand, it's all an extension of that creative practise. I think it's quite telling which departments of which theatres were furloughed faster than others. I think you can tell who places an emphasis on teams and who doesn't, I think for the really successful organisations, we don't have an outreach team because every member of the company that we work with on those big productions are ready to respond to people passing by and asking questions. Everyone has a shared understanding that it is where we are creating together and people who are passing by and experience that have a direct connection to the work theory are making, it's not an us and them. I think that's essential, and in all these conversations about funding, I hope people don't just try to return to the norm. I hope it now becomes ingrained in the work going forward. For it to work really well it has to be in every part of what you are making.

**What are the logistics of getting licences/insurances for performances in non traditional spaces how do you get Local authorities onside when you are approaching them instead of responding to a commission?**

**Joanna:** An important thing is knowing your site and finding who owns it, it might be council land or private property, that will have an impact on how you approach things. Also the different stakeholders involved, like the local residents around the area who might be impacted, and make sure you foster a strong relationship with those people. Practically that was going to community meetings and finding out why the different characters were and who held positions of power and who could help you in different ways. Who was more nervous about the activity so before you make the work you can have those conversations and be really honest about what it will involve. In terms of permissions, sometimes it is going directly to the individuals, sometimes the councils have arts teams and they can help facilitate those conversations. It might be through the community team or the events team. If you've got someone backing you it can make things simpler. You can sometime put a use of space application in and you just need to provide a lot of information and if you're using any outdoor spaces it can trigger is ESAG process, which is Event Safety Advisory Group, which is all sorts of different council and public service (police, environmental service, fire etc) so if you are doing something particularly on a big scale they will want to see your event plan and within that all your method statements and risk assessments, and so it might be that you submit that for approval or attending several meetings. It often depends on the scale of what you are looking to do. If it involves street closures it will require a lot more processing than a performance in a park for example.

**Emma:** I'd also like to stress the importance of production managers - a lot of the time you are having to persuade a lot of people who do not understand the concept of what you are trying to do. One of the biggest things i've learnt from working in community work is being as positive and influential in the way you talk about your work in case you get a stick in the mud. But having a

production manager who is experienced with those insurances can be vital. If you get stuck you can also call up insurance companies and ask what cover you need and what they can provide.

### **If i'm pitching an idea to a producer for development, how finished should the idea be? And what are the really important things to include in my pitch.**

**Daniel:** I dont think ive had a designer pitch a project to me and I'm in a particular position in the industry where it would be very unusual for someone to pitch a project to me, even a writer, because I work as an independent artist and my job is to put my work.

I'm afraid the answer is 'depends', which is a frustrating thing to say but different stakeholders of funders or literary managers and producers have different ways in which they want to be involved in the ways of supporting the work and what that means is there are different stages at which they want to get involved. I would also say that the earlier you are in your career the further along the idea probably needs to be in order to persuade someone of the value of the idea. The more of a track record you have the more work you can prove that you've successfully realised, the more embryonic your idea gets to be. But if you don't have the benefit of a portfolio or a track record of work then you need to produce different evidence that it's going to be good. That might mean more sketched, text. I would say that one of the things I benefited from earlier in my career was 'always work with people who are better than you'. Talking about the brilliance of your collaborators is a different way of talking about the brilliance of your idea. It reflects well on you, because you've got these brilliant people to work with you, even if they don't have any more track record than you do being able to talk specifically about the ways in which these people are brilliant is also talking about the ways the idea is brilliant.

**Emma:** I've learnt that you are pitching yourself not just your idea, knowing what your project needs shows that it's not just a good idea, but that you are a good idea. We do have a bit of a barrier in pitching as designers that we aren't just creative brains we are capable of running budgets and we are capable of time management, but you have to push a little bit harder to prove it because when you say designer people think you can just draw, which is a massive generalisation to say, and probably not entirely true but it does feel like a barrier we have to fight against.

### **Now that the industry has paused due to covid, does the panel think we should be redefining our role as designers, especially if we want to create our own work? It feels like our careers are often in other people's hands and it would be great to think that we can start creating something.**

**Jessica:** I think the answer is Yes! I've had so many conversations about theatre and what theatre is and what it can be and the thing that comes up is all the time is roles, hierarchies, buildings, people and power. So i think it's really important that designers start to think of themselves as artists. Sometimes it's just semantics but they are important shifts in how you are seen in a team of people, and how to make these things equal. I think challenging these things is really important. Designers are problem solvers, you know how to navigate and

transform a space, it's all about the visual language, and that visual language is needed now and it's something that can be achieved in how to get into those empty theatres and do something there that doesn't necessarily need loads of people or a script, and I know that's saying 'theatre will change' but I think it can encapsulate all those things. You can still have the director and the scripts but I think it's important to think about all the other ways theatre can change, the theatrical experience can change and evolve and I think it's really key in terms of being agents of that change. I think it's thinking about what a modern day audience is in terms of covid, what that is going to do to how we are safe and what experience they can have and how we communicate in a verbal or a visual way, and designers can be at the centre of that.

**David:** If you've got an idea, go for it! Put it together, build yourself a gang and do it. The support from like minded people, maybe it's a couple of designers, or a designer whose supported by performer mates or musicians.

**Jessica:** At People Show we talk a great deal about the collective imagination. You get to a point where you don't know who had the idea, because the idea came about because of the conversation you are having together. I think even just groups of designers, working together, that can change the idea of what a designer is. Because artists will work like that, together, but designers tend to work in isolation. So it's about how you can work collaboratively together, which #SceneChange has shown with the tape.

**Daniel:** There's never been a better time for a wider range of artists to take a lead on projects, because the arts council really don't know what performance is at the moment, how can they? Because we have to imagine it and inevitably the offers of ideas are going to come from those who have been habituated to offering ideas to funders and producers but it's an exciting time to offer new approaches and new ideas, and I think that the landscape has never been more open to the possibility of ideas coming from places where might not usually come from. I think there are a set of power structures and relationships that mean it will be a bit harder for those offering ideas from places where the industry isn't used to ideas coming from, it is a shift and a change. That shift is happening but people need to keep pushing to make that happen. I really urge you all to be pitching ideas to everyone, they won't all come off but the only way change will happen is if people make it happen.

Also, there's never been a better time to approach a writer you admire and ask to work with them! That's always more true than you think it is, but it's more so now.

**Jessica:** The same goes for Sound Artists and Lighting artists, actors, people are desperate to do what they are good at, to validate their art and make a difference. As freelancers, we've all had work disappear and I think everyone is questioning their own roles within the theatrical landscape and I guess you can either wait for things to go back to some kind of normal, whatever that is or give up or for me perhaps more importantly shift how you work within the theatre genre. I know personally I feel I'm more proactive about what sort of work I want to make and how I want to make it. A lot of other people are feeling like that, from all levels, so go for it.

**Emma:** Following from dan's comment, higher up there is an expectation and a structure that designers aren't necessarily in line with, but whilst they aren't going to expect ideas to come from designers they aren't going to reject them because they are coming from designers. We have to allow ourselves to do it, and coming from an unexpected position as a designer will make you stand out. If they are just getting writer/director applications you are going to immediately stand out.

**Joanna:** Rethinking your practise: some of the projects we worked with David on, we did a conference for the Arts Council. And we wanted to rethink how people might gather together in a conference setting to reimagine the future of the arts, so not a small topic but it was really important for us that it would be outdoors, and beyond a simple brief we asked David to create a space where people could think and behave differently. I don't know why all these theatres aren't banging on the doors of designers because designers are people who think about people's experiences in spaces and if that's what we're currently exploring I don't know what that isn't at the forefront of our thinking.

**Who are the panel inspired by? Would you say this type of work, away from a proscenium arch is mostly inspired by the spaces you find and work in and that leads your process. Is the space itself the most important part of the process or is it a visual led process that is then put into a space.**

**Jessica:** For me it's artists, films, poetry, books. It's always an eclectic mix of people and genres. Painters, installation artists. It's also for me about the ethos of how people make art. It's about the power of the collective imagination.

**Dan:** The large scale participatory work I've been part of (the glacial valley in east Durham) really is about a place and so that the place itself provides a lot of the design parameters. But really what it's about is the people who engage with that place and the place itself so the real inspiration comes from the stories people have about that place. Things that come up again and again. The way we create an environment within what the natural environment already gives us is about engaging with a set of connections and lived and living history. The way that those relationships are changing, so the inspiration comes from all the people involved with making the project.

**Jessica:** I would say, to me, it's contextual with how you design for something. It depends on the group of people making the show and who the show is for. The globe main stage is like a site specific, you design it like it's a site specific, I'm not someone who can impose anything on somewhere unless that's what you are trying to do, to create the friction. It's down to what the piece of work is about.

## In what ways do you think community led and or design led performances can lend themselves to sustainable and eco conscious ways of working.

**Emma:** The wonderful thing about working with communities is that you become incredibly close with people who are absolute lynch pins of their area and they know everybody and if you need something to go somewhere they will find a way.

**Joanna:** With Flood, we were there for 8 months so we accumulated a lot of stuff, dozens of boats and a set that floated on a number of repurposed plastic barrels so we tried to source as much as possible locally to keep our carbon footprint down and we planned our get out with as much care and attention as i think we did the show itself, it was a week long get out but we'd been planning it from the beginning, but all 360 barrels had to find a new home, and the boats were taken away by members of the community or re sold to pay for the parts of the get out. You have to be as creative in the undoing of your project and thinking about that from the beginning.

**David:** This was a real advantage of the designer - production manager role, because I was able to think about the choice of materials and how they could work in terms of the get out. We recycled all of the steel which came out of the show and all of the plastic barrels went back and were recycled, all the plywood went to recycling, costumes went to charity shops. It was a huge amount we were able to do because it was thought about.

**Joanna:** It was also cheaper, fundamentally, to try to dispose of 360 plastic barrels that would have been not only terrible for the environment. So often that kind of recycling / repurposing is the most efficient in all areas.