

ARTS CATALYST

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PRESS RELEASE

TEST SITES: CALDER VALLEY | SUMMER 2019

Arts Catalyst presents a touring programme of installations and participatory activities exploring ways of caring for the ecology and water systems in the Calder Valley.



Hebden Bridge Arts Festival at Hebden Bridge Town Hall, 21 – 29 June 2019

Mirfield Arts Festival at Mirfield Library, 13 – 14 July 2019

Across the globe, floods, loss of biodiversity and rising temperatures are pushing communities to rethink the way they live with natural and built environments. Environmental change represents a matter of concern that cannot be dealt with uniquely by scientists and decision makers; instead, it is a common ground that requires acts of re-imagination.

In the Calder Valley in Yorkshire, flooding and water pollution have been a problem for over 200 years, and in 2015 a major flood galvanized local communities into taking on a more active role in maintaining and managing the river and waterways, through volunteering and initiatives designed to enhance the resilience of the local ecology.

Since 2017, Arts Catalyst has been working with artists, anthropologists and stakeholders from the Calder region to collectively explore water governance and its relationship with health, wellbeing and the resilience of communities and environments. The project asks ‘how can we re-imagine our relationship with the infrastructures that govern our everyday life through practices of care?’ The core team comprises artists Ruth Levene and Invisible Flock, anthropologist Megan Clinch and Arts Catalyst curator Anna Santomauro in conversation with local stakeholders and members of the community.

Over the summer, Arts Catalyst will present two new participatory installation works that emerge from the inquiry, marking a pivotal stage in the process.

Ruth Levene | Working Waters

Working Waters is an artwork by Yorkshire-based artist Ruth Levene that takes the form of a 3D model representation of the Calder catchment. Populated by a variety of moveable miniature scenes – from canal locks to flood defences, tourists on walking holidays to flooded shops – visitors are invited to direct the scenery around, to activate and exert control over the landscape itself and become a steward of the water systems. Building on research developed over the past two years *Working Waters* is part of the wider project, *Test Sites: Calder Valley*, which brings to the fore the complexities of the valley, its material and immaterial infrastructures and its governance. Here, a cyclist, a reservoir and a group of protesters become part of a multi-layered micro-reality in which visitors are invited to re-imagine their own agency within the ecology of the valley. *Working Waters* is made in conjunction with model maker David Riley.

As part of the project, a series of workshops led by member of the *Test Sites: Calder Valley* co-inquiry team will explore the interdependent relationships within the water system. Visitors can sign up via artscatalyst.org.

Invisible Flock & Quicksand | Duet

As part of *Test Sites: Calder Valley*, interactive arts studio Invisible Flock and their collaborators [Quicksand](#) present a new iteration of *Duet*, their multi-platform digital art project about making connections, and finding space in our daily lives for expression and reflection. Comprising an interactive installation that aims to explore the relationship between the river Calder and its inhabitants, this new version of the work invites participants from the local area to respond to a series of questions via a [temporary, artist-designed website](#), the answers of which will form an integral part of the finished work. The anonymous glimpses respondents leave will become an evolving, ephemeral artwork of stories, captured and woven into a digital light and text sculpture. By virtually connecting multiple voices from the communities who live along the river, *Duet* seeks to produce a choral and amplified perspective on the role that the river plays within the local ecology of the Calder valley.

The *Duet* website is live now. [Click here to participate!](#)

Printing the Calder Valley

As part of the activities at Hebden Bridge Arts Festival, visitors are invited to explore the valley through a print making activity - for all ages - led by Liza and Joy, students from the Architecture MA at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. Each participant will create their own small section of the waterways of the Calder Valley using mono printing and stencils, which will then be

combined to create a composite picture exploring the environmental issues and experiences of the river Calder.

Acting as a form of visual storytelling, the print-making creates a starting point for sparking conversations around some of the topics present within Invisible Flock and Ruth Levene's works.

SUPPORTERS

Test Sites: Calder Valley is supported by the Wellcome Trust and Arts Council England, with thanks to the Canal and River Trust.

Duet was originally funded by Arts Council England, the British Council and Leeds Inspired. Co-commissioned by Yorkshire Design Group, Quays Culture, Threshold Studios and the V&A. Supported by East Street Arts, Leeds Bid, Leeds City Council and UnBox Festival.

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Interviews and images available on request.

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Notes to Editors:

Arts Catalyst is a nonprofit contemporary arts organisation that commissions and produces transdisciplinary art and research, activating new ideas, conversations and transformative experiences across science and culture, and engaging people in a dynamic response to our changing world. Through working with artists, scientists, communities and interest groups we produce projects, artworks and exhibitions that connect with other fields of knowledge, expanding artistic practice into domains commonly associated with science and specialist research. In its 25 years, Arts Catalyst has commissioned more than 170 artists' projects, including major new works by Tomás Saraceno, Aleksandra Mir, Critical Art Ensemble, Jan Fabre and the Otolith Group, and produced numerous exhibitions, events, performances and publications, collaborating with major arts, science and academic organisations. Arts Catalyst's Centre in King's Cross, London, is a hub for our work, nationally and internationally, where we can develop new projects and co-inquiries connecting local interests with wider planetary issues.

Ruth Levene is an artist based in Sheffield, Yorkshire working in video, performance, events, digital drawings, walks, installations and participatory work. Curious and concerned by the complex systems we live by, she is currently exploring water systems, farming and market driven developments of the countryside. She has shown work at the ICA (London), Arnolfini (Bristol), KIASMA (Helsinki) Northern Gallery for Contemporary (Sunderland) as part of AV Festival, Dundee Contemporary Arts, and Computer Arts Festival, Maribor (Slovenia), Modern Art Oxford, Netwerk Centre for Contemporary Art, (Belgium) and MK Gallery (Milton Keynes).

Invisible Flock is a multi award-winning studio operating at the intersection of art and technology. For over ten years they have explored the edges of technology, immersion and storytelling; Creating GPS powered AR art games, transforming discarded beach plastic into 3D printed artworks, large 3D public sound installations as well as pioneering digital public artworks that exist out at sea. Invisible Flock makes large scale, experiential installations for global audiences, creating sensorially rich environments exploring the complexities inherent in living through the anthropocene. They create through a research methodology routed in critical inquiry, collective exploration and curiosity. They work with people at the frontline of the issues their work is exploring, through long-form engagement and collaboration. Invisible Flock has recently shown work in Berlin, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Nigeria, Indonesia, Qatar, India and in galleries, museums and public spaces all over the UK.

Test Sites is Arts Catalyst's series of inquiries into matters of concern connected with environmental change – such as flooding, pollution, and species loss – and their impact on local culture and the health and wellbeing of our ecosystems and ourselves. At each site, we are involving local people in art-led co-inquiries, working with artists, scientists, and other experts. In the Calder Valley in Yorkshire, where flooding and water pollution have been issues for 200 years, we are exploring water governance in relation to health, wellbeing and the resilience of communities and ecologies, in partnership with local individuals and groups. The core team comprises artist Ruth Levene, anthropologist Megan Clinch, artist studio Invisible Flock, curator Anna Santomauro from Arts Catalyst, with input from Liz Sharp at Pennine Water Group, University of Sheffield, and the water@leeds group, University of Leeds.