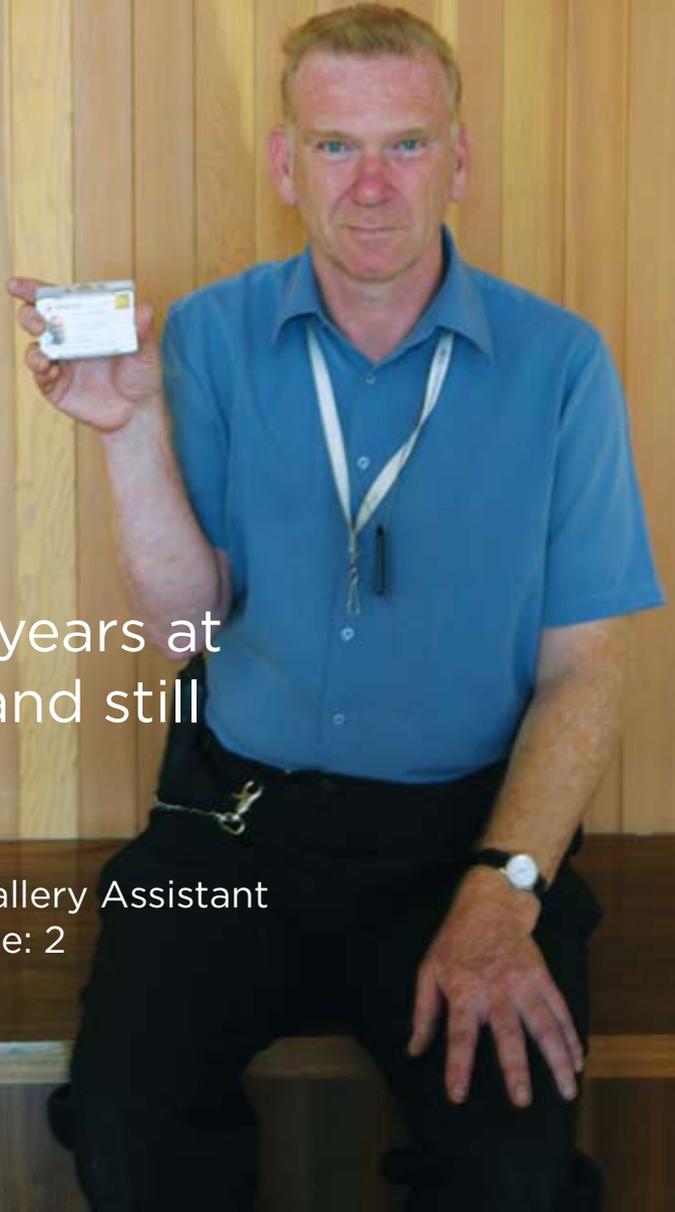


# The Weekend Supplement



“Nearly ten years at  
the gallery and still  
enjoying it!”

- Paul McIntosh, Gallery Assistant  
Meet the Staff, page: 2

# Introduction

Ania Bas, tea-drinker and artist in residence

25 May - 31 August 2009



Clockwise from top left: Apple Pie, Carrot Cake, Plum and Strawberry Cake, Chocolate and Prune Brownies, Cinnamon Swirls.

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*The Weekend Supplement* is the outcome of three months of sipping tea and eating cake with visitors to The New Art Gallery Walsall.

As part of my residency in the Artists' Studio, I have been developing ideas for tours and events that could take place at the gallery. All of the ideas have been generated by people who shared with me their time and a cup of tea - *Ania Bas*



Ania Bas, tea drinker and artist

# 'Teaing' & Chatting

## The art of conversation

Having a studio space was a truly new experience to me. My everyday studio is in my red suitcase on wheels which follows me around the country during my various projects. Having an actual space within the gallery meant I felt that I needed to fill it with something tangible. I am one of those artists who does not make art objects; I make situations. So, I proposed to serve tea and home made cake, keep the studio door open, chat with people and see where this would take me. One of the visitors suspiciously asked: "There is no such a thing as a free cup of tea, so what do you want in return?" Well, I wanted to chat about their experiences and memories of the gallery to see if this could provide me with the content for a series of alternative tours around the building. The New Art Gallery Walsall has a strong commitment to interacting with

its immediate audience - local people - I wanted to look into this. Returning visitors are usually here to see the new temporary shows, to bring kids for art workshops, or to use the loos. But I soon discovered some were coming to look through the gallery's stunning windows to observe the raindrops slowly moving down the panes of glass. I chatted with gallery visitors and gallery staff. People shared with me their thoughts and I wanted to pass them on. Twenty one ideas for tours and events were developed from these conversations. Five of them were developed into fully shaped tours/events and they will be presented during the weekend of 4-6 December 2009. This supplement is not only a record of all the ideas but an invitation for visitors to find their own way around the gallery and make every return visit a real treat.



Speed Tours - August 2009

# Meet the Staff Tour

Are living people as interesting as the exhibits?



Julie Jones, Gallery Assistant and Poet

Getting to know people working here has been an exciting adventure. This tour's aim is to allow other people to meet the staff and learn a bit more about these fascinating individuals.

Paul McIntosh, Gallery Assistant, took me to the old gallery building and showed me the place where Kathleen Garman's bust used to stand. Another Gallery Assistant Karen was always keen to share with me her knowledge about the Garman Family and Julie Jones surprised me with her poetry. Exhibitions Assistant Hannah Anderson turned out to be a great photographer. Technicians Mike and Jeremy not only found me a fridge so the milk and cake did not go off but also ran one of the most successful *Speed Tours* to date – a tour around their workshop.

My name is Julie Jones and I work at The New Art Gallery in Walsall as a Gallery Assistant.

In my job I interact with the public on a daily basis, giving talks on the building and the artworks from The Garman Ryan Collection.

Delivering talks allows me to meet many visitors. After one such talk I remember an elderly lady came up to me at the end and said "I enjoyed the talk but can I just say" and suddenly I felt my face go red and I could

see my colleague in the background eager to hear what she was going to say. I was so full of anticipation and dread, worrying if I had made some drastic error. I needn't have worried because she just wanted to tell me what beautiful skin I had. I must have stood open mouthed for what seemed like ages before I could utter my thanks.

It's stories like this that remind me that when working with the public you will always be continually surprised.

One of the reasons I enjoy my job so much is that it allows me to experience the work of artists that I would perhaps never come in contact with. I also enjoy listening to the visitors' comments on the exhibitions we display; I find that the public's contribution is as important as the artists. Their thoughts and comments can bring a whole new meaning to the artwork.

- Julie Jones, Gallery Assistant and Poet

# Speed Tour

## See it all in 15 minutes!

In a world where everyone is short of time, the idea of a quick tour around the gallery that ticks off all the 'must see' artworks is appealing to a large crowd. During my residency I have developed different *Speed Tours* from the perspective of various people working in the gallery including: Gallery Assistants, Cleaners, Technicians, Curators and Librarians. "Must see" for some was the view from the terrace on the top floor with a view of the Black Country, others paid attention to the leather banisters, whilst others concentrated on the invisible lines on the floor which divide the spaces that need to be buffed daily.

As part of the tours, I have been practicing being strict with the time and the amount of seconds people are given to contemplate an important place or artwork (approximately 15!). Revealing to the visitors parts of the building that are often missed, hidden or forgotten is like sharing little secrets of the place - going under it's skin, even if it is just for 15 minutes.



"Wall of Fame" - Technician's workshop



# Artists' CV Boost

Unmissable chance to exhibit next to van Gogh for one minute only!



Vincent van Gogh, *Sorrow*, 1882  
Pencil and pen and ink on paper  
44.5 x 27cm  
The Garman Ryan Collection, The New Art Gallery Walsall

Paul Cézanne, *Bathers (Large Plate)*, (*Baigneurs (Grand Planche)*), ca. 1896-97  
Lithograph, 43 x 52cm  
The Garman Ryan Collection, The New Art Gallery Walsall

During my time at the gallery I met a lot of artists. We talked about how difficult it is to show work in good company and how very few artists get to exhibit in great gallery spaces, such as the one we were sitting in.

We started talking about solutions; ways that the process of showing work could be more democratic and truly open to everybody. The artists I talked to did not moan, instead, they wanted to do something about it! This is how the *Artists' CV Boost* idea came to life. It is a

chance for 24 artists to show their work next to a van Gogh drawing for exactly one minute and instantly improve their CVs. There is no guarantee of fame, recognition or an instant job/commission offer. There is however, hope that showing next to van Gogh will raise questions about explored themes, the quality of the finish and the impact works have on each other when positioned in such close proximity.

A minute long exhibition vs. the reproductive abilities of the digital picture.

# Picturesque Tour

## Through the window

Windows have become a necessity for humans. Among their many functions they are a link to the outside world. Interestingly, windows are often positioned at the same height that we would hang a picture and they are also framed, giving them the appearance of a moving painting which changes with the seasons.

The New Art Gallery Walsall is very lucky to have an abundance of windows. It is unusually pleasant to find a gallery with windows that visitors have described as 'artworks/exhibits in themselves'. The effect of the light flooding into the galleries is just magical, lending the building a feeling of spaciousness and airiness. The architects



The view from Artists' Studio, The New Art Gallery Walsall



Laura Marie Curtin, Gallery Assistant and Writer

who designed it (Caruso St. John) liked the idea that the windows connect us to the town outside and are reinforcing the link between the gallery and the town. On rainy days the town appears drab and dull, with people busily rushing from A-to-B with umbrellas. Whereas, on a summer's day, the town can be a hive of activity with families picnicking beside the canal.

I once asked a visitor what they thought of the view from the window and they replied that they would 'rather look in than out'. This reminds me that the gallery itself is also a window, or portal, enabling people to experience art in Walsall. Ultimately, it is a window or doorway into the art world, whereby each painting, or artwork, is like a window into the artist's mind.

– Laura Marie Curtin, Gallery Assistant and Writer

# Sale: Self Guided Tour

“See One Get One Free” on all art experiences!



Image for Window Box, The New Art Gallery Walsall, November - December 2009

The gallery is located at the top of Walsall's high street, just by the canal and in front of the large square which is crossed by commuters terminating their journey at nearby bus stops. The gallery building stands out and many describe it as an odd puzzle not quite fitting in with the rest of its surroundings.

I started thinking about ways of creating a visual link between the high street and the gallery and a German couple who stopped for a cup of tea one day, came up with an idea of how to do it: they had just visited a nearby church and were excited by the fact that half of it has been

converted into a small shopping mall so “God and everyday needs could be closer together”. We started exploring the possibility of introducing a well known shopping language to the gallery to see if art and everyday needs could also speak a common language.

This is how the *Sale: Self Guided Tour* idea was born – displaying sale signs in the gallery windows and advertising a gallery visit as a mini sale on art experiences. Visitors cannot buy art, but they can see art totally for free all year round. Sale on a large scale: 100% off 7 days a week!

# All The Other Ideas

People, once encouraged, were coming up with more and more fascinating ideas for tours and events, and a public vote was held in late July 2009. Not all of the ideas were lucky during the voting but it would be wrong to forget them, as it is an extraordinary record of the imaginative responses.

Some of the proposals had to stay simply as ideas as the technology is not there yet i.e. to read people's minds. Others such as *Child Height* seemed to be making a point about the simple changes that would improve the gallery visit for a certain group of the visitors - in this case, children.



***Boring Tour*** explored the fact that galleries nowadays are advertised to be engaging, interactive, involving, exciting and innovative places. Quite far from what galleries used to be - quiet rooms where one could enjoy art in silence. This tour wanted to revisit being "bored to death" with art - introducing visitors to boring facts about the artworks. All topped off with boring

tea & cake, alongside a lengthy evaluation form full of detailed questions investigating the level of boredom reached during the visit.

***Swap Roles Tour*** invited gallery staff to change roles with their colleagues for a single day: to take on the responsibilities of others, answer their mail and phone calls, shorten their to-do lists and SURVIVE!

***Tour in Polish*** by an Englishman speaking Polish came from Tony, a gallery visitor who started learning Polish as a way to fight boredom. He shocked me with his great pronunciation and level of knowledge of my first language. We started chatting about the possibility of him running a tour for Poles to address the assumptions that English people do not learn foreign languages in

general, and among Poles, that English people are not able to speak their language.

**£££ Tour** idea looked into the financial value of artworks as well as other elements of the gallery's décor. In an age of financial crisis it is so easy to forget the art and concentrate on figures.

**Plug in! Tour** responded to iPod culture. The idea was to listen to specially composed music whilst looking at art. Some of the proposed music genres were: Garman classic; Ryan & Pop; Country Garman; Heavy Ryan. The

advantage of this tour is that part of the experience can be taken home and one can play the music whilst browsing through the purchased catalogue of the collection or whilst chopping onions.

**Complimentary Line** idea involved sourcing a line of complimentary text from contemporary authors for each artwork in the collection, to open artworks for new meaning.

**Scandal Tour** was inspired by the book *The Rare and the Beautiful: The Lives of the Garmans* by Cressida Connolly. The book reveals that the Garman's way

of life may have been seen as shocking by their contemporaries. If the Garmans were born in the 21st century, their lives would definitely have been watched closely by Hello!

**Curators' CV Boost** - an afternoon aimed at young curators filled with useful information about the daily chores of curating: creating the perfect label, learning about the pleasures and difficulties of working with dead and living artists, as well as mastering hanging artworks and befriending a spirit level.

**Paintball** - A day filled with paintball sessions



Artists' Studio AKA The Tea & Cake Parlour, *Speed Tour* participants leaving their mark on the wall

in the temporary exhibition spaces open to everybody (NOTE: painters welcome). The marks on the walls would create a documentation of the event as well as create an instant massive painting.

**Child Height** - an idea put forward by one of the mums. She wanted to see art hung at child's height rather than adult's height so her 5 year old daughter could enjoy paintings by great masters as much as herself.

**I Am Lost (Versions 1 and 2)** tours addressed navigational problems.

The gallery can initially feel like a maze and so a special SatNav built for the gallery would help people who find themselves lost. The advanced version (put forward by a 6 year old student from a local school) was device free - the building itself would read people's minds and direct them to the right place through a system of built-in floor light indicators.

**NAG Town Tour** looked into converting the gallery into a mini, self sustaining town for a weekend including park benches on the roof, Mr Sizzle food vans in the

entrance hall and market stalls in its corridors.

**What if Tour** - 73 entrants from all over Europe put their ideas forward to design The New Art Gallery Walsall. Only one practice could be chosen, but what if somebody else had won? For example 'muf' practice proposed artists' allotments on the roof, a 24-hour bar/café, a tattoo parlour and a launderette to be part of the gallery building.



The Artists' Studio AKA The Tea and Cake Parlour, freshly wall-papered

# Speed Tours - August 2009

*Speed Tour* from the perspective of the Cleaners

22 August 2009



*Speed Tour* from the perspective of the Curators

23 August 2009



*Speed Tour* from the perspective of the Gallery Assistants

24 August 2009



*Speed Tour* from the perspective of the Librarians

25 August 2009



# Chocolate and Prune Brownies

Make them yourself

300g soya spread or unsalted butter  
300g dark chocolate (at least 60% cocoa solids) broken into pieces  
5 large eggs  
450g brown sugar  
1 tablespoon vanilla extract  
200g (or a bit less) plain flour  
A handful of pitted prunes

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Line a large baking tin (34cm x 25cm x 6cm) with greaseproof paper.

Melt the soya spread and chocolate together in a heatproof bowl suspended over a saucepan of simmering water.

Beat the eggs, sugar and vanilla extract together in a bowl until creamy. Remove

the melted chocolate and soya spread from the heat and beat in the egg mixture.

Add the flour and continue to beat until smooth. Stir in the prunes. Pour into the tin and distribute evenly.

Bake in the oven for 20 - 25 min or until the top has formed a light brown crust and has started to crack. The giant brownie should not wobble, but stay gooey on the inside.

Leave to cool for 20 minutes before cutting into large squares whilst still in the tin. The greaseproof paper should peel off easily.

Enjoy with a cup of tea.



Chocolate and Prune Brownies (right), accompanied by Cinnamon Swirls (left) and a cup of tea (top)



# DIY

## Your favourite work

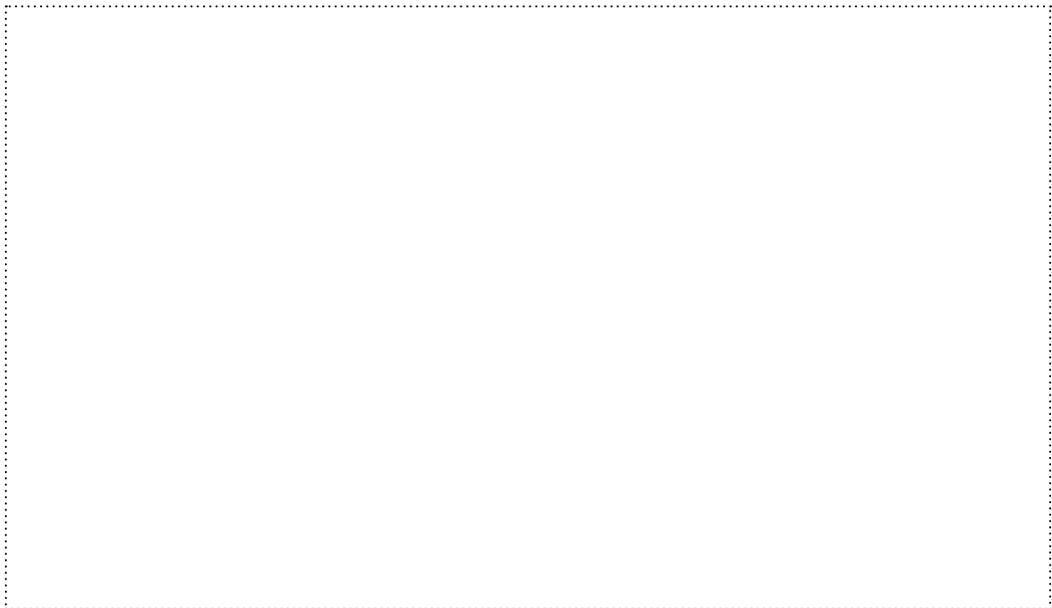
In addition to showing great work, The New Art Gallery Walsall also has a wealth of extra resources that are available to visitors. Go into depths with your favourite works. Ask yourself why you like it so much and.... do your research! To start with, note down the label information that is displayed by the work and then pop in to the Art Library on the Mezzanine Level and ask for references to the works and/or the artists. You can find out fascinating stories about the work itself or the artists who made it, as well as discovering your own personal reasons for being so attracted to it.

Title: .....

Artist: .....

Other info: .....

Space for all your notes:



# DIY

## Your top 5 attractions at The New Art Gallery Walsall

*Speed Tours* introduce visitors to the gallery from the perspective of various people working there. Each person put an emphasis on different parts of the building. Where would you take people if you were to lead the tour?

1. ....

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2. ....

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3. ....

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4. ....

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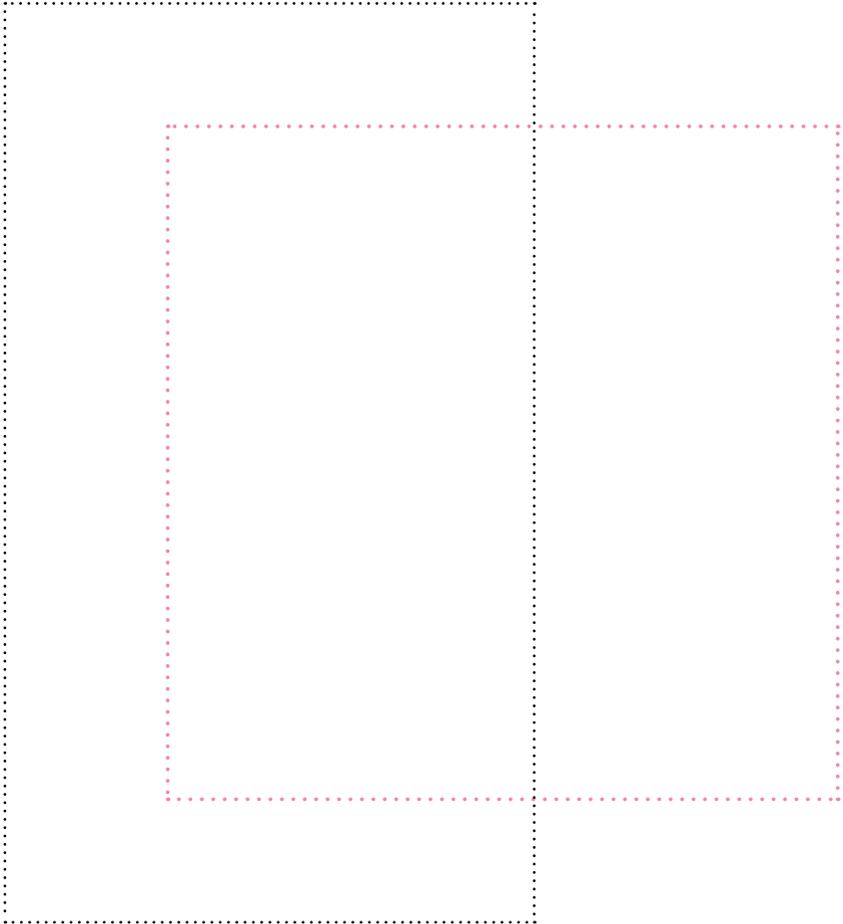
5. ....

.....

# DIY

## Picturesque Tour

*Picturesque Tour* (page 5) takes people on a window-focused walk around the gallery. Try it yourself. Bring with you a pen or pencil, find a window view you find interesting and in the box below express what you like about it: you could write a poem, draw the view or even count the number of clouds or birds you spot whilst looking through the window - or even the number of people who stop and ask you what you are watching! Windowspotting is a great way to engage with the building and fellow visitors!



What shape is the window that you like?

# The Artists' Studio

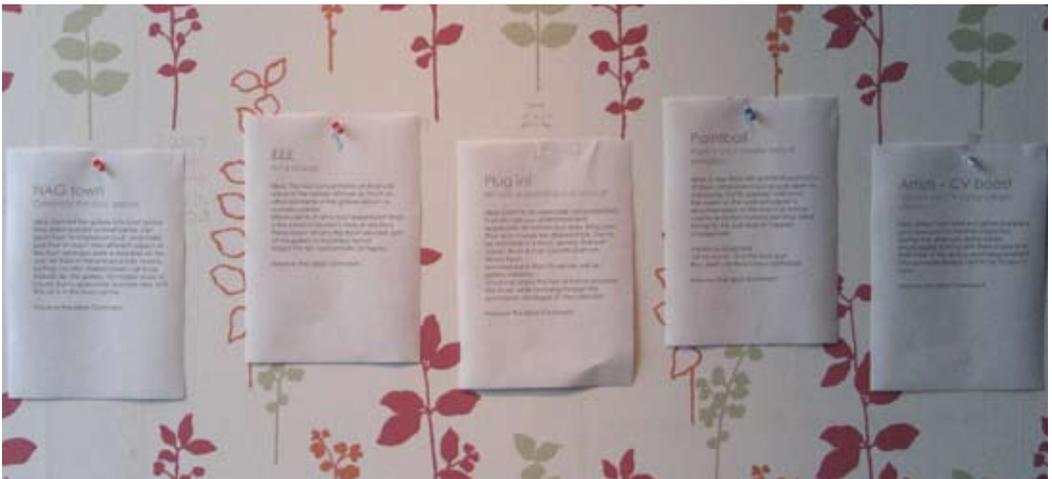
By Helen Jones, Exhibitions Curator

The Artists' Studio is a lively and welcoming place within the gallery where artists and gallery visitors can meet together to explore new ideas. The studio is rarely used in a conventional way and its appearance is rather chameleon-like as each resident artist transforms the room to suit their tastes and needs. Past projects have involved turning the room into a recording studio, a bicycle repair centre, a garden with real turf and, as we have seen, a tea & cake parlour! Artists use the studio as a base to create new work. The studio door is usually open for gallery visitors to pop in and be part of the creative

process. The artists working in the studio rarely use paintbrushes and pencils and instead use people and the “art of conversation” as their medium. A residency is often a period of discovery for everyone involved including visitors to the building, the gallery staff and the artist themselves. It's always really exciting working with artists as they develop new ideas. Artists think and work in so many different ways and being able to contribute to this creative process is a unique experience and very different to presenting finished artworks and organising exhibitions.



Helen Jones, Exhibitions Curator



Artists' Studio, AKA The Tea & Cake Parlour - voting day, 28 July 2009

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Thank you!

This project has happened because of the help, support, good word and hospitality of many people.

Big thank you to: all The New Art Gallery Walsall Staff for their support, help and participation in the *Meet The Staff Tour*. Big thank you to Julie, Laura, Paul, Hannah & Helen for their contributions to this booklet, and to Mike and Jeremy for their ongoing support on so many fronts; to all the Gallery

Assistants, the Cleaners and office-based staff for their inspiration and patience in replying to my multiple questions; to Maggie for a wonderful couple of afternoons of tea and cake debates; to Tony for his presence and help and eagerness; to Louise for all the comments and cake-sampling; to Dave for continuity; to Mr F for all the help and for proofreading in the middle of the night; to Alice for putting the publication

together; to Bronek and Marta (for the access to the oven and being great hosts) and to Muk for everything. Thank you to all my tea & cake companions – it is you who made it all work.

And special **thanks** to Helen Jones, for believing in this project from the very start and for enabling it all to happen.

- Ania Bas

The Weekend Supplement  
4 - 6 December 2009

Edited by Ania Bas



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