

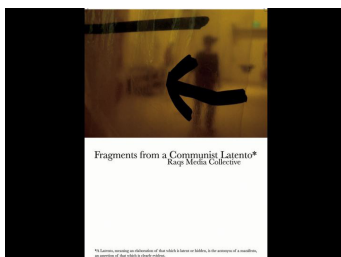


① Transcript of the presentation:
'A Latento: 2007 – present'
by Alex Farrar, Harry Meadley
and Iona Smith at:
NIGHT SCHOOL #2
Studio Gander, London
19:30–20:15 08/12/2010
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Iona Smith

Alex Farrar

Harry Meadley



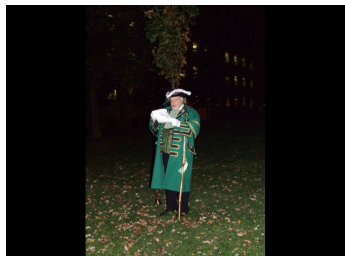
↳ I was going to say I'm Alex, this is Iona and this is Harry but we can skip that bit. We are going to talk about a group of collaborative projects that we began during our studies under the moniker A Latento. A Latento has been a series of publications, a residency, some performances – whatever suited the occasion. I can show you a slide that kind of explains the meaning of 'A Latento' which we found from this book, we haven't really come across any other reference to it, I don't know if you can read it, it says '*A Latento meaning an elaboration of that which is latent or hidden, is the antonym of manifesto, an assertion of that which is clearly evident*'. So the name for us was suitable for elaborating or publicising what wasn't known, which at the time when we were first years in Leeds Metropolitan University, was us.

↳ We don't know to this day whether Rags Media Collective made up 'A Latento' or not. But we've continued this meaning for them.

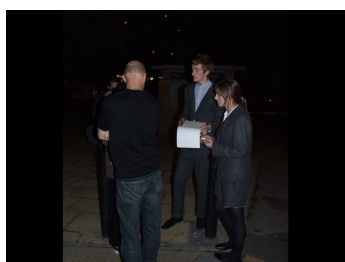
↳ We thought we better just say at this point that we are not going to use this talk to talk about our own individual works but just about our way of working together and the different ways in which artists work together to support each other.

Yeah, it's a bit of a coping strategy.

So one of the first things we did was about finding an audience. For us we decided to conscript an audience during a kind of art trail in a large city-wide one-night-only public art event, we connected two events with our conscriptions and this one is an image of Iona's:



So we had been having a discussion about how to engage an audience that was beyond our institution and we had been discussing patrons, which I think Alex is going to come to shortly, and how to rope people in, quite brazenly, into being our critical audience and our patrons in effect, not through financial means but just through critical engagement. So the three of us have always endeavoured to make it known that our practices are very different and that we work together to support each other critically. So this was my work to try and conscript people- I hired the town crier of Huddersfield as Leeds had fired its own town crier fairly recently. And I asked him to read out a cry that I had written which was to inform people about my work and how to become better informed about it.



Yep and this was mine. I made a handmade suit for myself and an assistant, who gave out these business cards to the passing crowd of the Leeds art world. The business card appointed the reader a patron, and then I kind of, I took it a bit further than Harry and Iona, and I jumped on these people after they had read the business card and took their email addresses. From that one night I had a group of sixty five patrons, who I basically addressed all of my work at for the following twelve months. There was a dinner party after six months, and a closing exhibition at the end. I sent announcements monthly telling them about my work, always maintaining a highly sincere tone, which made the construction overall quite ambiguous.

You had some people being asked to be removed from your list.

Yeah mostly it was quite positive and I showed a lot to this constructed network.



This is sort of a picture of my one, because actually I had a sort of weird solo show at the Leeds Met Gallery on the night, which involved quite a heavy level of security



For clubs.

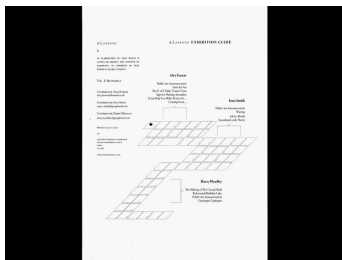
measures for the exhibition. And as part of that the gallery assistants were also flyering, and the flyer was my patron conscription. We should probably also mention the spot that we chose is the prime flyering spot in Leeds.

Yeah, the light night thing it was a part of was about taking over the city from that. So that lead onto A Latento volume one, the thing before was 'minus one', which was to pre-empt this publication we put together, the subtitle for which was 'incunabula' which is, I don't know, is it 'swaddling clothes'?

It's related to incubate.

And also any book printed pre-fifteen hundred is referred to as incunabula. So the early stages of printing. I think the reason we made this book was I think how we encountered, and learnt about most of Art was just through books. The Henry Moore Institute Library, and things like that, was sort of our refuge from our institution.

It had a lot to do with the situation we were in, this first one was really a way of exhibiting our work. But we continued to do it, after receiving opportunities to show in art spaces, because it was the only way people could really see the work outside of Leeds. So this first one, there was three hundred printed and distributed to a network of artists' book shops in Amsterdam, London and New York.



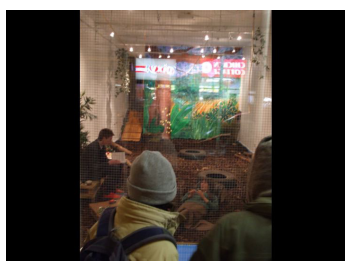
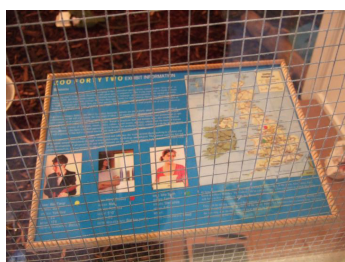
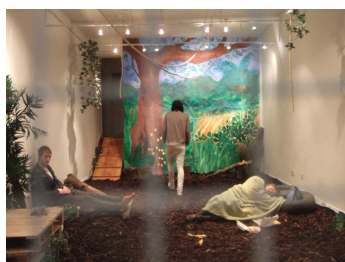
The book was designed as an exhibition, and this in the contents page which lays out all the pages as if they were rooms in a big gallery. You could take the binding off the book and lay it out, and play around with it. And also it is a serial publication, we decided that we were going to do several of them, so we applied for an ISSN number from the British Library and in the back of A Latento volume one it contains its own ISSN record, which we found out afterwards, because the British Library got pretty excited about it, is that it is the only serial publication to have its own catalogue record inside itself.



This is a poster for an exhibition we did as a pretext for launching A Latento, to release it. We had checked out a number of spaces and this one was inviting artists to submit proposals for a week long residency. This space is basically a

shop on the busiest shopping street in Leeds. And, yeah, part of the requirement was that you had to create a kind of visually interesting display, whilst working. So we kind of responded with this.

The other thing was that the public wasn't allowed in, you could only see artists working and what was produced.



↳ Christa Ackroyd: Hello good evening and welcome to Tuesday's look north.

Harry Gratton: On the program tonight: The BNP folk song written and performed by a Dewsbury councillor outside an Asia MPs office.

But we should sort of say that pretty much the night before the deadline we discovered this residency and over-night came up with what we thought would be a sure-fire proposal. Basically that was so good they had to give us the residency, all of which was just so we could launch the book.

You can see the books stacked on the thing. And, obviously we converted the gallery into a zoo animal enclosure. The wiring on the window is a cage thing, not fire-proof glass, we put that there. The mural at the back is usually there but the bark we put there.

Yeah, and so continuing the patron thing, this list of patrons that primarily Alex was courting, we just told them that for the duration of the residency we were going to be locked inside the gallery and that it was their personal responsibility to feed us. So essentially we'd starve if no one brought us any food. Which back-fired a bit because we got brought loads of food and felt a bit bad in the end. And one of the patrons we had basically brought along BBC news, which we were totally unaware about.

It was also near a bar where a lot of the BBC and media people go.

Yeah, we'll play a video now, where we became an 'and finally' for BBC Look North:

Christa Ackroyd: From pollution hot spot to salmon river. How one of our waterways is being transformed.

Harry Gration: And monkeying around. Why these students have been caged exhibits for four days all in the name of art.

Paul Hudson: And a mild night to come across Yorkshire, but there is rain on the way for tomorrow, don't forget the forecast at five to seven.
<cut>

Harry Gration: Before seven o'clock:

Christa Ackroyd: Yes, please stay with us, lights, camera, action. How one young man from Leeds has landed a part in a major new film made in Yorkshire.

Charlotte Leeming: And join us later in the program - it's feeding time at the zoo, but these animals are of the artistic variety.
<cut>

Harry Gration: ...some strange things in the name of art and three students from Leeds, are certainly going that extra mile to express their creativity.

Christa Ackroyd: I'm not sure how to deliver this line but I will try. The trio have given up their creature comforts to live in a zoo at an art gallery in the city for four days. Charlotte Leeming has been to see how they're... bearing up.

#music: Jungle Gym at the Zoo - Elephant's Memory#

Charlotte Leeming: Now it used to be that art was all about technique, colour and composition but these days thanks largely to performance art, just about anything goes.

#music: Jungle Gym at the Zoo - Elephant's Memory#

Yes this is a zoo with a difference, three students in captivity for four days and nights – their every move watched by passers by, relying on the kindness of strangers for their food.

Harry Meadley: It's been a cheap week, you know what I mean like, getting bought stuff. Like, I've not spent a penny. Which is a nice rarity... We've got a dodgy toilet at home and a messy house mate so this ain't that different.

Alex Farrar: To start with we came in, they tried to wave to us, and we've gradually had to leave society really and become another object.

Iona Smith: It's interesting having people come down and take care of us, the zoo keepers, they are sort of our patrons really.

Charlotte Leeming: For the students this is a serious comment on our voyeuristic society, but is it art?

Builder #1: Eerrr..

Builder #2: You've picked the wrong two here.

Builder #1: You have, I'm off...

Mother: Now with Tate gallery and so on, people are reassessing what we class as art and I think, yeah, if it makes people think, perhaps that is what really art is about.

Posh Man: My sort of art, take me to Florence any day.

Charlotte Leeming: Some may say this experiment hasn't been that much of a stretch for the art students but it's certainly given the public some food for thought. Charlotte Leeming, BBC Look North, Leeds.

Christa Ackroyd: Well from a zoo to a circus..."

That was longer than I remember.

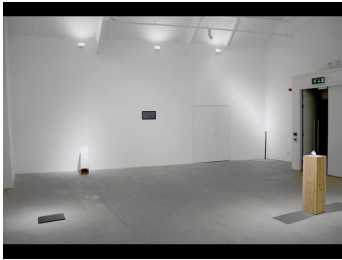
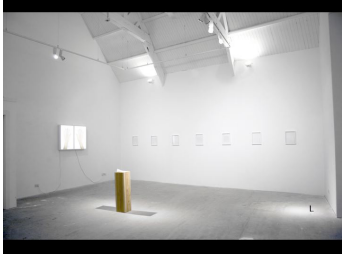
This is ourselves watching it live when we should have been in the zoo.

Someone tutted then.

I'll do the segue. This is the next book, so from the exhibition guide book as an exhibition, this was, we came across 'sammelbände' which do you want to explain that?

So we moved from incunabula to sammelbände, which were, we discovered, a sort of trend in the Tudor period before individual book production really took off. Basically what would happen is, people would release things just as folios and individual texts. People would buy these and would collect and amount them themselves, and then have them bound into much larger volumes, And what actually happened is each individual person,





who bought these various different texts would somewhat curate or organise their own volumes. And this really appealed to us as a structure, where with the previous book we had divided it up ourselves into three things. We took this idea of one book in which is basically three separate books individually designed by ourselves. Because we are not really like... We don't really collaborate or work together, we always retain our own practices within this A Latento idea.

And then we applied this structure to a group show. So we approached a space, that had never been used really as an open exhibition venue, about doing a group show, which we then divided over two weeks into three solo exhibitions, four days each.

Yeah, which reflected the exact same structure, a two week block and the image changed every four days.

So we'll quickly go through them... This is the space... And we also for the two week block had a billboard.

Yeah with billboards, when you book it for a two week slot, normally it means you are only paying for the one person to put up a new image once. But we had it so the billboard would change over night as the exhibition would change. It was a bit of a logistical situation.

This is Iona's show...

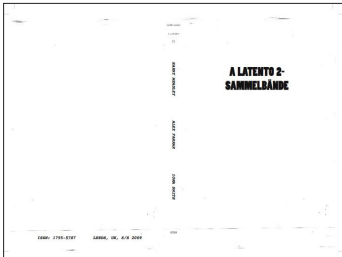
Billboard...



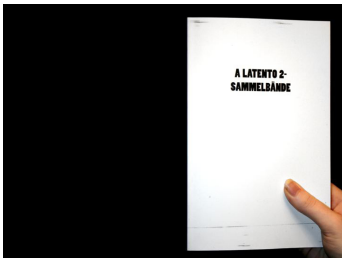
Alex's show...



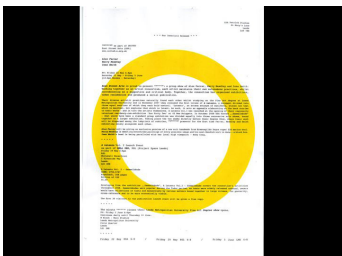
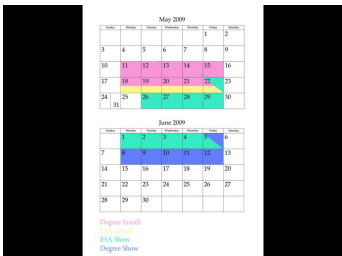
Billboard.



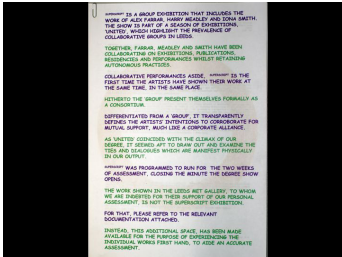
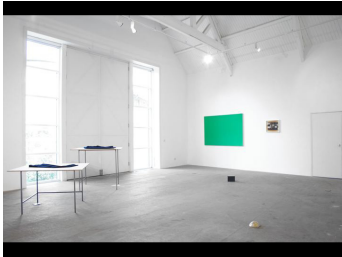
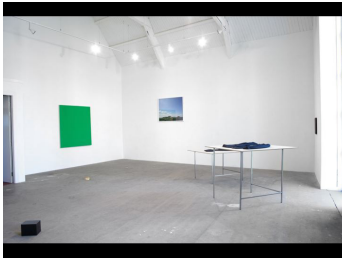
So what followed this was the book that, the exhibition was designed to pre-empt, and they are sort of one thing together really, the way we constructed it. Almost the book is more important than the exhibition because I think we learnt quite quickly, being in Leeds, that in an actual exhibition that you put on only has so much life-span or can only reach so many people. And you know, publications can travel a lot further.



So this was the next busy period, which was around our actual degree show. For this we were invited to show again at the same venue as you've just seen - at East Street Arts. Invited to have our degree show there basically. And we decided to do them both. We had our individual spots within the university degree show, and then we had a group show at East Street Arts which was during the week of our assessment, which closed immediately as our degree show opened.

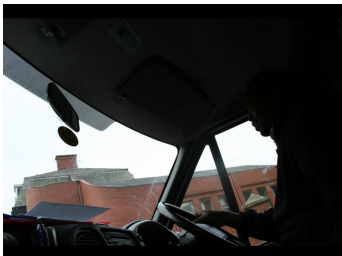
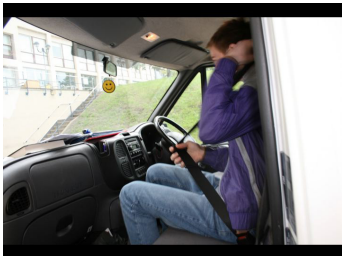
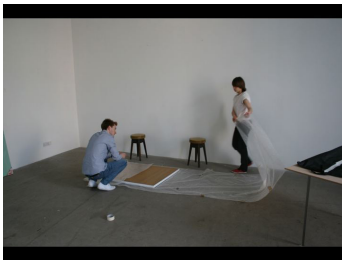


It was a bit of a big operation.



Everyone can read that quite clearly.

Can everybody read that or would you like me to... yep. I think the only thing which seems really good to point out in that one is that it seemed apt to draw out and examine the ties and dialogues that were manifested in our output. The bit at the bottom is '*the work shown in the Leeds Metropolitan Gallery, to whom we are indebted to for their support of our personal assessment, is not the ^{superscript} exhibition*' and we attached documentation for that. So basically the gallery attached to our university ended up hosting this exhibition which was at East Street Arts in Leeds so we could move the exhibition to Leeds Metropolitan University for three hours.



We'll quickly show... This is the ^{superscript} exhibition at East Street Arts, which was actually the first time we'd actually done a group show of our works together. And we properly curated and stuff. But what we didn't really realise, that by having this group show on top of our degree show, that it would be an issue within the University. And without going into too much detail, certain members of staff refused to travel to assess the exhibition. Even though it's like three minutes away. And it kicked off a bit. So we...

We wrote this statement, which basically is about acknowledging the importance of A Latento and really defining it for the first time – as a consortium.

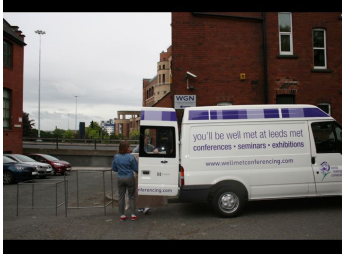
People at the back probably can't.

It was a half an hour block in which the assessors would assess it. So during one morning we had to pack up the entire show at East Street Arts.

Oh this is our van driver who got pretty involved.



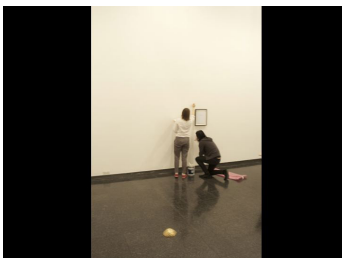
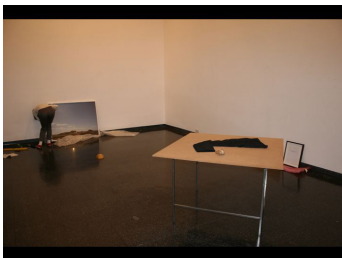
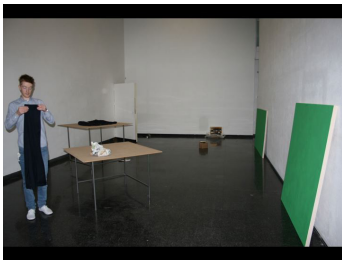
Transport it.

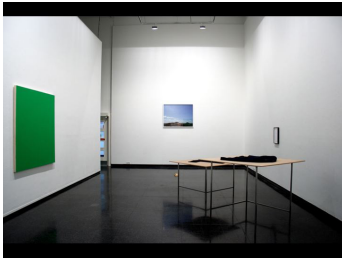


That's the whole show in the van.

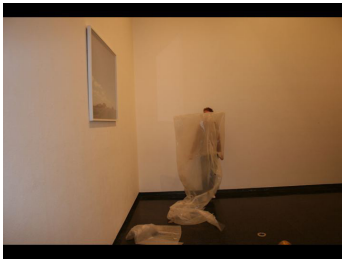


Back to the Leeds Met space, which is where my A Latento minus one had originally happened. They sort of came to our rescue at the last minute.



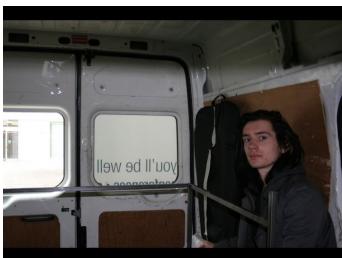


And reinstalled the show in their really nice space, which was only exhibited to our tutors for a thirty minute block. And not even all of them actually came...



We had to get it back to East Street Arts in time for opening hour at twelve o'clock.

Following that, this was like commando-style.





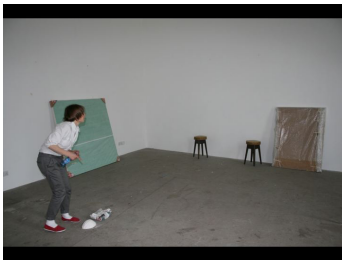
This is the driver helping us in the end, he got involved...



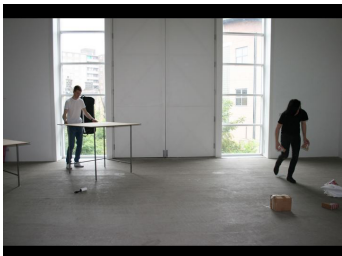
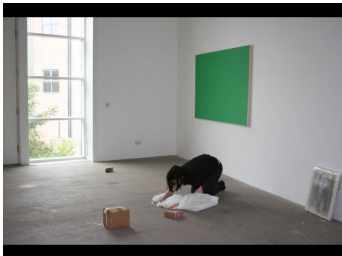
Saying good bye.

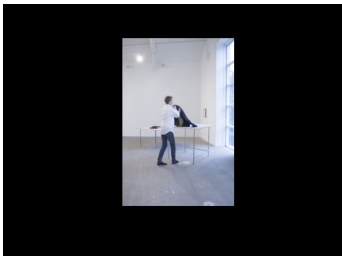
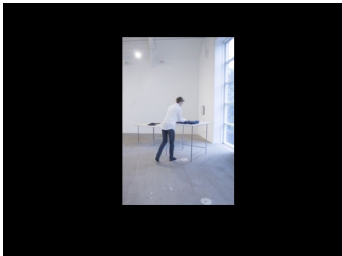
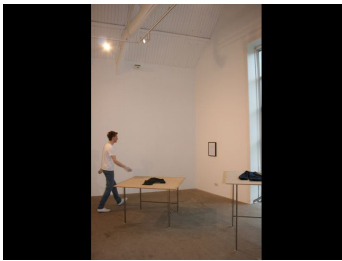


Pretty emotional.



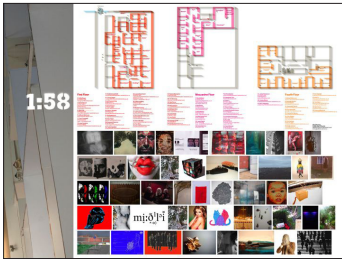
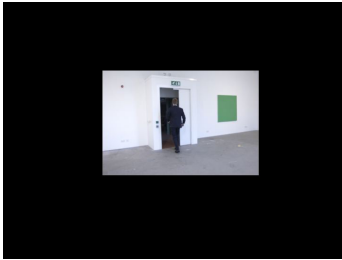
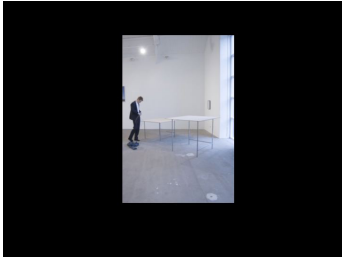
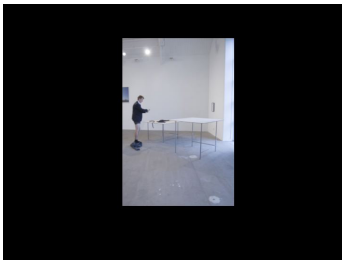
And pretty much rushed like mad to have the entire show re-installed to open again at twelve.



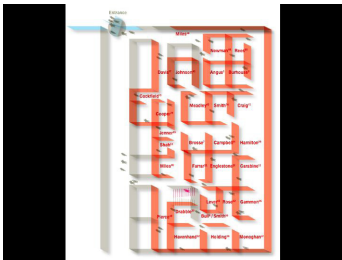


So over this three week block we had on the first Friday, the ^{superscript} exhibition opened, then the following Friday we had the book launch for A Latento volume two.

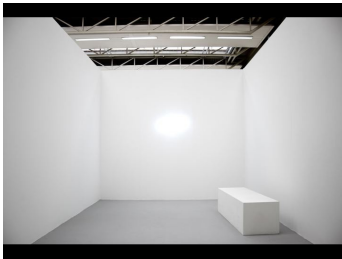
And the following Friday after that was when the degree show opened and ^{superscript} closed – illustrated here by Alex having to put on his Suit, which was on show for the first time, and then heading to the degree show opening.



So that show closed as our degree show opened. This is the *press* for the Leeds Metropolitan University Degree Show.



We sort of ended up, a bit accidentally really, having our spaces quite close together on the same floor.

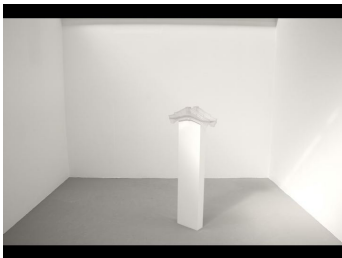


And I think it was also totally accidental but all of our degree show spaces looked...

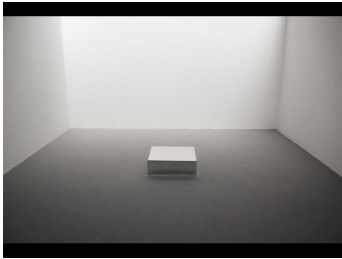
Well invisible I think actually. There was something transparent or reflective or simply camouflaged about it.

Barren.

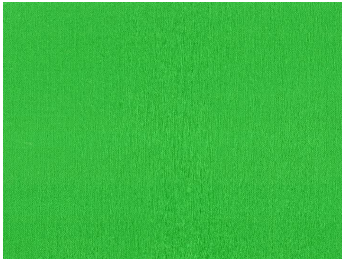
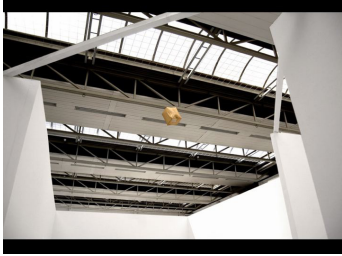
Something missing?



I think our relationship with the course over the three years was quite a complex issue and all of that obviously came to a head when it was the end and our degree show. As far as I can gather the complication was because we came up with this structure to present ourselves as a *consortium*, a corporate alliance idea in which

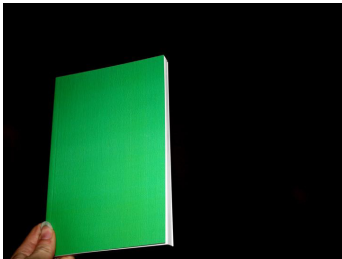


you're all individual parties, we weren't an artists group, which was important, and we tried to separate this distinction but when it came to actually assessing that – there wasn't a structure to assess us individually and as a consortium so that's why it got complex.

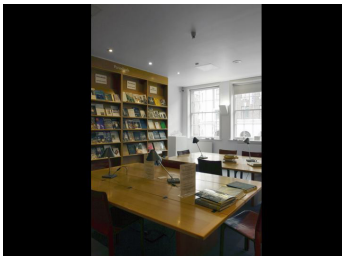
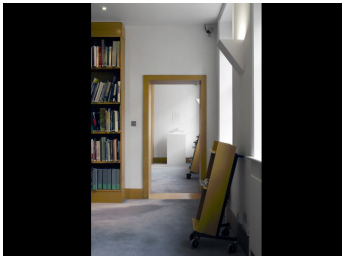


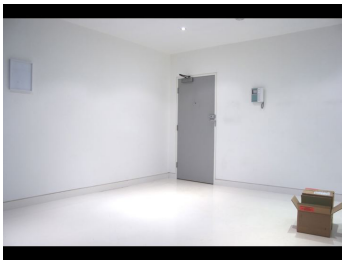
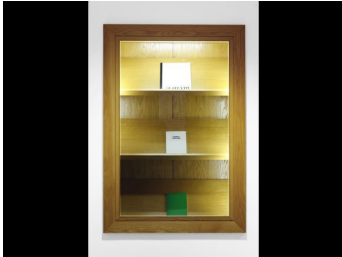
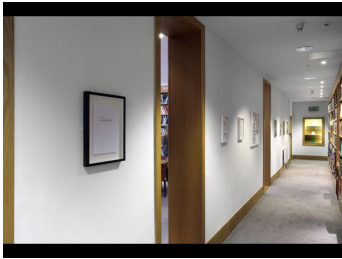
With the following A Latento publication, which basically covered this whole thing of the three shows, we looked back on our education and invited a lot of the people who were responsible for it, all of our final year personal tutors and also Derek Horton, a former art educator and now writer, who wrote a large text on art education in general. This text was taken on...

Yeah, he did really well out of it.



Following this, in our second home, the Henry Moore Institute Library, we ended up having an exhibition about the A Latento books. The way we constructed it, because also this connection between the publications and the exhibitions and the play between them, this exhibition was constructed as a *cross volume compendium* of works that acted as illustrations of works which were only in the books, and on top of that, it was also the first time A Latento three was made available and for the duration of the exhibition only one copy was in the library and all the others were locked in a cabinet.



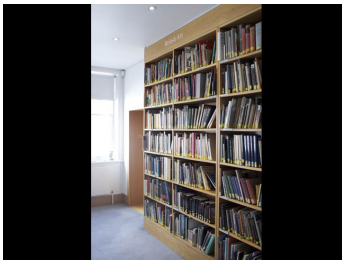


Then we had another launch at a private space which was invite only because when we had done the volume two launch we had decided to give them away for free to anyone who turned up which meant that practically all of them were taken for free; *quite sad*. So, we used invites to control giving them away, we took donations, but we didn't get very much.

Most of that's my money.

We made a straight forward catalogue of the Henry Moore show which is quite funny because it was already a show about A Latento... For this volume there were only two

The next book...



Over the top.

editions made, one for the British Library and one for the Henry Moore, which was packaged in the standard archive boxes widely used at the library for archiving exhibition ephemera.

Perhaps we should talk over it. The sound is good though.

Which went against every reason that we'd started to use the book in the first place.

But we make up for it...

Maybe now we can get on with what we're up to at the moment. We've all been out of education for over a year, we've moved away from each other, which led to us talking about whether it was important to keep making these books together. And we decided that it wasn't but we were still interested in artist books. So we're launching a repository, an online repository for artists' books.

We've been approaching people for a couple months now, including

You know those YouTube unboxing videos? I don't know if you'll've ever come across them. This is an unboxing video of A Latento four.

We got this really luxurious grey suede interior made.

But at this point, on a practical level, the first one was 300 copies, the next two were 100 copies and then by the fourth one we'd just done two copies.

The evolution of the A Latento project started with us really loving artists' books, the physicality and all that stuff of books, and over time moved towards digitisation, like everyone... We came up with this structure for an online repository which we're intending to invite people to contribute to, for the sort of PDFs of preexisting books, but also new books and things like that. It was always an idea with A Latento that it moved beyond just us. The structure of a repository, which is actually usually an academic thing, mainly from science fields, that whoever is invited to be part of the repository can deposit any of their output and it acts as an archive with a community attached to it.

a mixture of established artists and recent graduates to use the repository to archive their books. And it's going quite well, we have published and unpublished material, and the idea, if it isn't clear already, is that by visiting the site, you can download PDFs of these books. Our motives are to encourage the production of books and also create a better and more effective way of distributing them. Which is one of the obvious problems of artists' books, that they're inherently localised.

There's also a sense of what we've constructed with the repository is what we probably would have loved to have existed when we'd started A Latento.

Yes. One of the things we'd talked about for the future, we'd like to approach colleges and universities and have students use it as a tool for self-publishing. But also to invite galleries to use it for catalogues which usually just get lost after the fact. One of the things we were talking about involved more historical artists' books which are totally inaccessible, they're not on show, they're obviously out of print.

The dream is for it to be a comprehensive archive of artists' books.

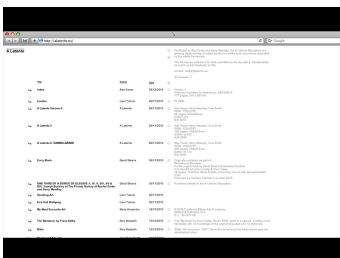
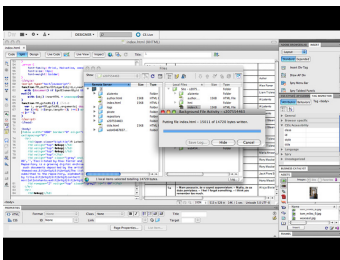
Artists' books is quite a loose term including limited print runs, made primarily by artists.

What we're going to do now is actually put the website up live.

There we go.

If we just check that it actually works, give it a refresh. There we go.

I can now give you a demo, this is what we've established so far. Various publications... We have a nicely designed option, of these expanding fields.



Audience

↳ Do 'London' by Liam.

That's a really big file to show you now.

We can do 'London', but it might take a while to load. You can,

		catalogue style, re-order the list, and basically the way it works is that every time something is added, it goes on top of the list.
Has anyone said no?		A couple of people have been quite opposed to it.
Who are they?	You'd be surprised, it's mostly recent graduates with quite nice books, who are holding out for a publisher. And they're a little bit worried that they're going to lose that opportunity, which we've argued, using our own terminology...	Alex invented the term 'reverse-Benjamin'.
	Without really understanding what <i>Benjamin</i> was about.	
You better say something about it.	I've argued that the more something is reproduced, the more people see it, the more people want to see it and the more likely it is that it will be published- that there will be a demand for it. But... that line hasn't really worked so far.	
	Pull up Maria Anwander.	OK would anyone like to see another book?
	I think the biggest one is still under 70mb, so here they are loading on to the window automatically but you can download them onto your hard drive very easily too. This publication is called My Favourite Art, she's stolen the work labels of all her favourite pieces.	I think this is quite a big one, they're all full quality print files.
		We have one idea for a pirate repository, but we've not worked out how far we want to take it, pirating peoples books and seeing how that works.
Can anyone upload something or do you choose it?	Anyone can approach us with a book, but it's not a feature of the site that people can go on it and upload their book automatically. Though we haven't said no to anything yet.	
↳ Are all of these made to be books which are printed?	Some of them aren't, Ignacio Uriaarte has two books in the archive, one which is published and one which is just for web viewing.	There's definitely an opportunity for unpublished material and some people have designed material specifically for the repository itself. But essentially what it allows for

↳ I was curious to know why you used the word Patrons, rather than critic or public?

I think that's it, if you have any questions, or anything else you'd like to talk about...

is for these artists books to exist and as a platform which removes printing costs and distribution.

I suppose Patron implies support, usually financial, I'm not sure when it came up though, I guess it was a nostalgia, or romanticism for a more personal form of support. All the artists and organisations we knew in Leeds were supported by the Arts Council to whom you had to communicate through bureaucracy.

We got a lot out of it though.

↳ Where do you live now?

Amsterdam.

London.

The band's split up! Bristol.

The repository came out of our moving away from each other, we didn't have a level of communication or interaction that could have warranted another group book. So the repository idea came out of that.

↳ I was wondering why you were holding on to the book format and high-quality print, why not just have it as a searchable, digital text, and embrace the format. Do you want people to print them?

There is a presumption, especially with the text heavy ones that that is how people will use them. But it's not prescribed how people should use the site.

People *can*.

Is that because you like books?

We're presenting people with print ready files, anyone can print off their own copy of any book that's featured on the repository. Obviously they're all covered by copyright.

Yes I think so, it's not that it's a strategy to remove artists' books from existence. A lot of the books are only available in some shops, or there's only so many copies of them, and a lot of the time you might never come across a book which is actually really good. So the idea with the repository is that we group them all together. So the PDF files are books, because otherwise it'd just be a website with stuff on. If there's books that we really like, we do try to get in touch with the person and ask their permission

to host the book. And I can see why some people don't give us it. The pirate repository is an idea, which we've already started to a certain extent by scanning in books that are out of print, but all of it is because we really like artists' books.

↳ If you print them out on A4 paper, where originally intended to be used differently - they're meant to be in different formats and sizes. You wouldn't take big books to the toilet would you?

Yeah to some extent you'd need a proper printer and cropper to bind it yourself, it would be a bit of work. It's actually quite nice just to have the PDFs files- you can zoom in!

↳ Do you only have good books?

It's mainly people we know, or certain books we really like. Maybe after a few years when it's grown, its scope will be much larger, we'll move towards trying to get every book ever. Good books a weird phrase though.

↳ Is there anyway that you could make money out of it?

But if you wanted to, you could employ people. So maybe you should start to advertise?

The blank space on the right is for advertising.

One idea was for a back up hard copy of everything on the repository, so we have thought of doing a facsimile publication.

An annual.

Like a really big book, that has every single thing in the repository printed in it. We could try to sell that.

You couldn't read that on the toilet.

No.

