



Adopting a Philosophy of Solidarity and Fellowship at Kettle's Yard

A Study of Sanctuary at Arbury Court Library

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July 2024

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1 Executive Summary

1.a Key findings and recommendations for Kettle's Yard

Finding: Solidarity is extremely important to community participants and their understanding of Cambridge. Collaborative artwork is a meaningful way of exploring and expressing this solidarity.

Cambridge is a notoriously divided city and can be a difficult place to make a home and feel secure. *Sanctuary's* aim of celebrating North Cambridge's diversity and warmth was a significant motivator for many – community participants, artists, and staff members alike – to get involved. The desire to articulate and share a sense of belonging in North Cambridge is widespread and deeply felt. Collaborative artwork, displayed in a community space, was felt by many to be a meaningful and effective way of showcasing community solidarity and fellowship.

Recommendation: Kettle's Yard should continue to play an active and activist role in supporting the community to celebrate and develop North Cambridge as a warm, diverse, and welcoming place.

Finding: Moments of solidarity and fellowship can always be forged, but are diminished by unrealistic scoping and timelines.

Sanctuary, for all stakeholders, was punctuated by special moments of connection, a testament to the caring and highly skilled work of project staff. However, these moments could have been more embedded and impactful if the time that it takes to develop relationships and work together had been accounted for more mindfully. Institutional processes could also benefit from in-built moments of reflection and attention to solidarity and fellowship. Particularly, the availability of the artists was curtailed by their commitment to exhibitions. *Sanctuary* indicates that it is unreasonable and improbable to expect artists to deliver meaningful community collaboration alongside the final preparations for a major exhibition.

Recommendation: Community projects cannot always run on organisational or artists' timelines, and should be planned with appropriate time and space for relationships to develop. Realistic attention needs to be paid to commitments around exhibitions.

Finding: Long-standing, community-created artwork is highly valued by members of North Cambridge communities, but Kettle's Yard could do more to celebrate it.

Sanctuary's display in Arbury Court Library proved a source of pride and hope for many members of North Cambridge communities. Its permanence, in contrast to the quickly changing exhibition schedule at Kettle's Yard, will allow its meaning and implications to develop over time and inspire

new connections, conversations, and creative acts. Significant resonances also played out in many people's personal lives.

However, while many community participants expressed gratitude to Kettle's Yard for hosting the project, and admiration for its skilful handling, few could identify Sanctuary's relevance to Kettle's Yard as an organisation, or felt that Kettle's Yard had learned from the project. Thus, there were missed opportunities to demonstrate to participants that *Sanctuary* was meaningful and important for the institution, as well as for the Library and artists.

Recommendation: Kettle's Yard should explore new ways of articulating the importance of North Cambridge communities to itself as an organisation.

Finding: Working with members of the North Cambridge community is an energising and rewarding creative challenge for artists.

The artists of *Sanctuary* explored new approaches to their practice and saw themselves and their work as embedded and valuable within the North Cambridge and wider Cambridge communities. The nuanced and diverse experiences and ideas that community members hold are a rich and generative impetus for dialogue and artistic practice. Staff excelled at supporting people to feel comfortable in sharing their stories, thereby making possible this artistic engagement.

Sanctuary also informed the personal and professional art making of participants and project staff, and the community of contemporary creative practice surrounding the project should be understood holistically.

Recommendation: Kettle's Yard should continue to support and celebrate collaborative artistic projects that bring significant mutual value.



2 Project Overview

Sanctuary at Arbury Court Library (referred to here as ‘*Sanctuary*’) was a collaborative art project, developed and delivered between Arbury Court Library, Kettle’s Yard, members of North Cambridge communities, and artist Issam Kourbaj. The project celebrated Arbury Court Library’s new status as a [Library of Sanctuary](#), conferred in August 2023, by bringing together the communities of North Cambridge and locally-based artist Kourbaj to create a catalogue of stories of sanctuary, told through personal objects belonging to participants.

The project was led by Karen Thomas, Community Manager at Kettle’s Yard. Community participants were invited to bring along a personal object to drop in sessions and, through that object, explore their thoughts and experiences around the themes of home and sanctuary. They shared their stories through recorded conversations with Florencia Nannetti, the Project Coordinator, and were photographed holding their objects by Photographer My Linh Le. These recordings and images formed the inspiration for a sound artwork, produced by Hannah Kemp-Welsh, and for a new set of sound panels at Arbury Court Library. The artwork for the sound panels was created by artists Issam Kourbaj and Mourad Kourbaj, and is now on display at Arbury Court Library. The artists also produced a set of postcards depicting the images.

Sanctuary began in May 2023, and the artwork opened at the Library in April 2024. Participants were recruited through drop-in sessions at Arbury Community Centre and Kettle’s Yard, social media and mailing list advertising, and some sessions with specific groups. Issam Kourbaj and Mourad Kourbaj then held two collaborative workshops at Kettle’s Yard to co-create the artwork with participants.



3 Research Overview

3.a Acknowledgements

Special thanks to all the community participants who took part in the research for their generosity with their time and insights. Sincere thanks of course to staff across Kettle's Yard, and especially to the *Sanctuary* team.

3.b Research questions and justification

This research was guided by the question:

What new knowledge can be drawn from adopting a “philosophy of solidarity” by working in fellowship with our communities in North Cambridge and embedding community engagement in Kettle's Yard activity?

The term ‘philosophy of solidarity’ is drawn from Sarah Plumb's (2021) extensive research into Kettle's Yard's seven year *Open House* programme, running from 2014 to 2021. Borrowing from Bernadette Lynch (2021), Plumb describes a philosophy of solidarity as the working and social conditions through which:

Museums and galleries become useful and relevant through working in “fellowship” with communities “in conscious, equitable and interdependent relationships” (Plumb, 2021: 102, quoting Lynch, 2021: 4).

Plumb expands her theory of how a museum should enact these values:

[Such a museum] recognises and values the strength of communities, and the mutual support they can offer each other. It supports communities' capability building, which in turn leads to self-empowerment, self-determination, and reclamation of their representation. Communities develop their own creativity, using the museum as a community asset to respond to urgent need, and the museum supports communities to thrive (Plumb, 2021: 6).

This sort of community-driven, highly responsive museum practice is, as Lynch, Plumb, and others explain, an extremely high standard that few, if any, cultural institutions have fully enacted. Rather than assess *Sanctuary's* success against these criteria, in this report I seek to identify where solidarity and fellowship flourished in working practice and community experience, and where they were curtailed.

A *Sanctuary* team member describes their hopes for how such research can be valuable to Kettle's Yard:

I really liked the research question of ‘what can we learn,’ which I don't think is usually asked. I think the question that you normally have is: ‘what works and what didn't,’ in very practical terms. ... I think [the question of what we can learn together] has more to do with an ethos that the organisation might be able to adopt.

As staff members explain in research interviews, the Community and Learning team at Kettle's Yard have extensive expertise in community and socially engaged work, and are aware of the factors that describe, foster, and limit success for different stakeholders (see Kettle's Yard, 2018, Plumb, 2021, and Open House et al., 2021). Instead of repeating these findings, this research draws on this extensive body of institutional knowledge to focus on how the energising concept of a philosophy of solidarity operates throughout the life of a project. This approach fosters a generous spirit of knowledge sharing and collaborative learning, and thereby strives to enact the same philosophy of solidarity as the object of its study.

Accordingly, the original research question was refined:

What does adopting a philosophy of solidarity and fellowship bring to collaborations between North Cambridge communities, artists, and Kettle's Yard?

With the sub questions:

1. What defines a philosophy of solidarity and an attitude of fellowship?
2. What does putting a philosophy of solidarity into practice involve for Kettle's Yard?
3. What do communities of North Cambridge find useful or enriching about working with contemporary artist practice?
4. How can community participant knowledge and experience inform and bring value to contemporary artist practice?
5. How can the knowledge and experience of North Cambridge communities inform exhibition-making at Kettle's Yard, and how can this contribution be made visible?

3.c Research activity overview

13 one-to-one interviews were held with 11 contributors between September 2023 and April 2024. Six of these contributors were community participants, three were Kettle's Yard staff members working on Sanctuary, and two were artists. These participants represent around a quarter of those who took part in recording and photography sessions.

One research workshop with two participants was held in February 2024. This workshop used zine-making and discussion prompts to reflect on the project.

Observations and informal conversations were conducted during *Sanctuary* activities, including four recording and photography sessions, two artists' workshops, and the opening at Arbury Court Library.

A note on names: with their consent, I use artists' full names and community participants' first names. For participants who prefer not to be identified, I use pseudonyms. To protect their anonymity, staff members are not named in this report.

3.d Approach and methodology

This research was originally commissioned as an action research project. A diverse set of practices that have been explored in extremely varied ways, action research can be helpfully defined as:

A participatory process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes (Reason and Bradbury, 2007: 2).

An inclusive process of enquiry undertaken by practitioners working alongside academic and non-academic researchers with an open and exploratory environment, where expertise is valued non-hierarchically (Pringle, 2019: 163).

Elements of action research, and especially the underlying values of inclusivity, pursuit of meaningful activity, and a resistance to hierarchy, have informed my processes of research design, data collection, and analysis. The orientation towards ‘practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes’ informed the research questions, and the relationships I formed with participants. ‘Practical’ in this context refers to learnings that can usefully be implemented by Kettle’s Yard, and the fostering of solidarity and fellowship are taken as ‘worthwhile ... purposes’. Pringle’s exhortation that ‘expertise is valued non-hierarchically’ has informed my data collection process, and I have endeavoured to position all community participants, staff, and artists as situated and significant holders of personal, social, and professional expertise.

However, the structure of *Sanctuary* precluded the ‘inclusive inquiry’ that Pringle describes. In true action research, the research questions, data collections, and analysis processes would have been co-designed and co-executed by community participants, staff, and artists, and the researcher would coordinate and oversee this activity (Brydon-Miller, 2018). This work would then feed directly into a change in policy, expectations, or behaviour, which would be felt by and important to the participants. Even if not formally referred to as a research project, and while participation at different moments will vary in depth and structure, such an approach ensures that the standpoint, values, and methods of an inquiry responds directly to, and is open to critique by, all stakeholders. The pre-determination of research questions by Kettle’s Yard and then by me as the sole researcher, and the lack of engagement with participants in the research design, delivery, and write-up, meant that there was neither the time nor infrastructure for the sort of long-term, trust-based relationships that action research requires. Thus, the data collection methods (listed in section 3c) were more traditional and transactional than anticipated.

These methods were more appropriate to *Sanctuary*’s extended time period, were flexible to suit different needs and availabilities, and fruitfully captured a range of experiences as they developed. This research structure also reflected participant interest; for many, *Sanctuary*’s appeal was in sharing and understanding stories of the people of North Cambridge, not necessarily in enacting change through collaborative inquiry.

Thus, while highly valuable for recording *Sanctuary* from multiple perspectives, creating space for reflection, and identifying opportunities, this work cannot be classed as action research. If Kettle's Yard wishes to conduct action research in future, research needs to be integrated into the core project activities and participants need to be granted more time and opportunity to shape the inquiry itself.

3.e Researcher positionality statement

I am a doctoral and freelance researcher and practitioner in museum and art gallery participation galleries. I am white, have only lived in the UK, and speak only English. My previous degrees are in Classics and English (BA) and Latin Literature (MSt). From these studies, I took forward a critical approach to disciplinary history and an interest in unpacking notions of prestige and belonging. My current academic work investigates how people make meaning in art museums through their experiences and values, as well as the cultural and social narratives around museums and collections.

Although the project explicitly recognised that sanctuary and home are universally resonant concepts, I would like to acknowledge that, unlike many of the participants, artists, and staff, I do not have experience of displacement or of moving countries. I am also familiar with and comfortable in arts and cultural settings, especially in Cambridge, where I also hold or have held roles at Kettle's Yard, the Fitzwilliam Museum, and the Museum of Cambridge. As a doctoral researcher, I am used to thinking and talking about research, something which may not be true of all participants.

My experiences and identities inevitably influence my interpretation of the data. I have tried to be aware of and note by own assumptions and biases, and use my subjectivity as a starting place for critical exploration. However, I oversaw the research and wrote this report alone, and readers should remember that my perspective is limited.



Photo credit: Helen Dickman, 2024

4 Findings

4.a Project drivers

Before discussing the findings of the research questions and the moments of solidarity that emerged or were foreclosed, it is helpful to understand the factors that conditioned the project as it developed.

Over the 11 months of its design and delivery, *Sanctuary* adapted and reacted according to the conditions in which community participants, staff, and artists operated. Described by a staff member as a ‘highly reactive’ project, the factors, or drivers, that impacted its development shifted throughout. These drivers included:

Partner organisation desire

Sanctuary was initially proposed by Arbury Court Library, an organisation with whom Kettle’s Yard has worked previously but who had not instigated a project before. This invitation to celebrate the library’s new status as a Library of Sanctuary, and Kettle’s Yard’s acceptance of that invitation, is clearly indicative of the sort of solidarity-based relationship that Lynch and Plumb describe. By recognising each other as partners with valuable resources to offer and stories to tell, Kettle’s Yard and Arbury Court Library acted in fellowship during this project.

Time

Availability – of artists, of project staff, and of participants – was a highly restrictive factor throughout *Sanctuary*. The organising idea that the final artwork would be co-created by Issam Kourbaj and the community in a series of workshops proved impossible because of Kourbaj’s commitments to his contemporaneous major exhibitions, *Urgent Archive* at Kettle’s Yard, and *You Are Not You And Home Is Not Home* at the Heong Gallery. Kourbaj comments:

I absolutely would love to have the time [to work more collaboratively with the communities of North Cambridge], but because of my upcoming exhibition, it’s the requirement of my time [that I work] full time in the studio. ... I am very happy to be supervising from a distance, if there is anything I am need to do I am very happy to do it, but the implementation on the ground is of my colleagues.

A *Sanctuary* team member shares similar frustrations, couching the lack of time in funding structures:

A lot of times you get the funding and you just have to go and I think that was very much the case here. If we lived in an ideal world I would start the conversations earlier with the artist and with the [community] groups. Just to have more of a plan that is less reactive. I feel at the moment that this project is developing in quite a reactive way.

Several staff members mention this reactivity at all stages of *Sanctuary*. It caused expectations and delivery to alter continually, leading to a lack of clarity among staff and a discrepancy between time initially

committed and time actually spent working on the project. However, this sense of urgency and uncertainty was not felt by participants, who almost universally reported feeling well cared for and supported to take part. This extended time period, although difficult for staff and artists when unanticipated, is an essential part of quality community collaboration.

As another staff member reflects, the project ‘took the time it needed’ despite funder or institutional requirements. However, as they observe, this time could have been managed more productively and caringly, with a smaller cost to staff, if its necessity had been acknowledged from the outset.

Care

The extended timeline was, in part, a product of the commitment of staff and artists to producing quality relationships with participants, and ensuring a meaningful experience. A team member comments:

I think maybe that's why this project has been so extended. Because [the staff and artists] really care. And they want [*Sanctuary*] to be the best it can be. And actually, all of us really care. So I think that's important. And I think care is so undervalued.

Museum scholar Nuala Morse's theorisation of care in museums and galleries echoes these comments. Morse (2021) explicitly recognises that institutions often have limited capacity to recognise and value the care involved in socially engaged museum practice. Morse identifies a ‘profound potential’ for creating a more caring professional environment by attending to and valuing the smaller acts of care that fill the everyday lives of socially engaged culture and arts workers, but which often go unacknowledged in any formal way. As I hope this research will demonstrate, such moments punctuated *Sanctuary* and, from the community participant perspective, are what made it special.

Willingness to Learn, Especially through Artistic Practice

The perseverance of staff and artists despite availability constraints and a lengthening timeframe speaks to an adaptability and willingness to learn and change. These qualities ensured that the level of care, respect, and solidarity expressed among staff and participants remained consistent despite these challenges. Furthermore, the experimental ethos of the project, like many at Kettle's Yard, created a commitment to listening and learning that was integral to these successes.

Sanctuary's openness to new working practices was evident partly through working with artists as core team members. Staff and artists each see the involvement of artists and their often exploratory, non-institutionalised practice as integral to supporting new thinking in the organisation.

Hope for the Future

Staff, artists, and community participants almost universally reflected on *Sanctuary* as a hopeful moment in Kettle's Yard's interactions with North Cambridge communities and with contemporary artist practice. Many were excited about the how this project built on existing relationships and were excited to see how *Sanctuary* would further energise these collaborations. As Anna, a community participant, notes:

I feel that there is this whole community out there who will see this project and will then think about their place in Cambridge. And maybe they'll want to connect with Kettle's Yard as part of that thinking.

A staff member echoes Anna's hope:

It could be that it starts the change rather than just generates the change straightaway. ... Maybe [*Sanctuary* and the research will] prompt the organisation to start changing certain things. I don't think it's going to cause a whole museum wide change, necessarily, but it'll just open some more points of reflection, for future projects.

Another staff member reflects on a long-term relationship with a participant in *Sanctuary*, and how cultural projects can shift individual and social attitudes over time:

You can see the impact that projects like this have, because it starts difficult conversations, as well as warm and fuzzy ones. And maybe [a Kettle's Yard project that happened] 11 years ago was a catalyst for this person to question some of their long held, interesting beliefs. And maybe it's given them cause to reflect who is in their community, and who is welcome in the community, and how they're welcomed in their community. And then now to be part of this project, which is all about sanctuary and welcoming refugees, whatever their background and experience and sharing their stories as valid as the person next to them in equal status. It's kind of amazing.

In a sector in which staff morale is often very low, especially among socially engaged professionals (Bee, 2023), this sort of commitment to and positivity about a changing organisation and local setting speaks to a supportive culture of learning and exploring that should be celebrated.

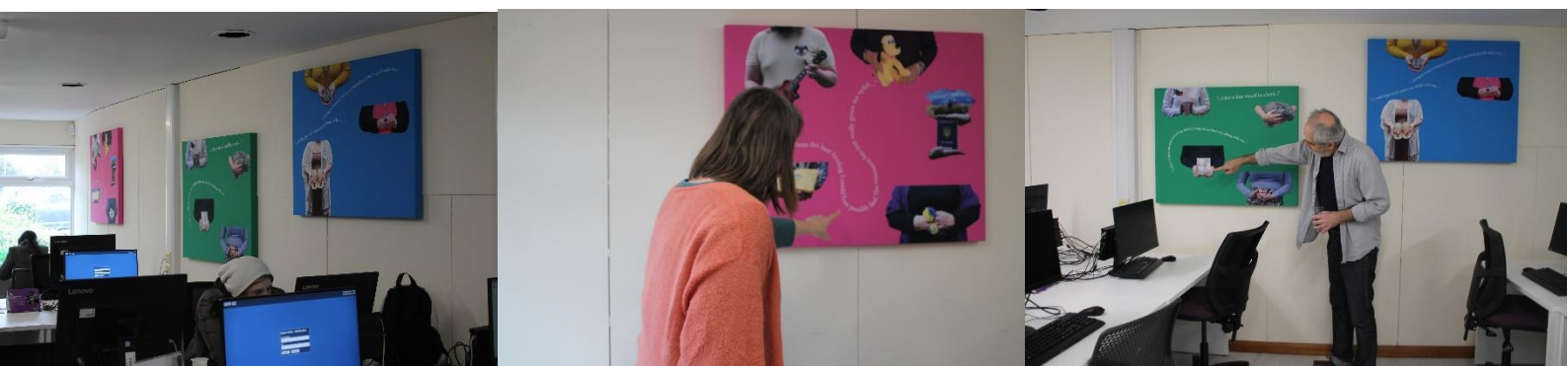


Photo credit: Helen Dickman, 2024

4.b Research questions

I now discuss the findings of the research questions, beginning with a summary under the guiding question. More detail is given in the findings for each of the sub-questions.

4.b.i What does adopting a philosophy of solidarity and fellowship bring to collaborations between North Cambridge communities, artists, and Kettle's Yard?

Solidarity is extremely important to community participants and their understanding of Cambridge, and collaborative artwork is a meaningful way of exploring and expressing this solidarity (section ii, iii, iv, and v).

As almost everyone I interviewed mentions, Cambridge is a divided city and can be an isolating or difficult place to make a home and feel safe. *Sanctuary's* activist aim in celebrating Cambridge as a diverse place of belonging and sharing was a significant motivator for many – artists, staff members, and participants alike – to get involved.

As I discuss in section 4a, solidarity is integral to, but often formally unacknowledged within, socially engaged arts practice. This desire to make people feel welcome and encourage a sense of belonging in Cambridge and in sometimes exclusive spaces like Kettle's Yard and Arbury Court Library energised *Sanctuary* and gave it a clear, unifying purpose. The expression of that purpose in a public artwork, in which people could recognise themselves and their input, made participants feel proud of themselves and their city.

Moments of solidarity and fellowship need to be felt in small and large ways (section ii, iii, and v).

As participants and staff reflect, solidarity and fellowship were most keenly felt in small interactions. A warm welcome and invitation to think creatively together by Florencia Nannetti and My Linh Le transformed the project for many participants from a cause of nervousness into something joyful. Similarly, working together with Issam Kourbaj and Mourad Kourbaj helped many to recognise themselves as creative people with an important part in creating the final artwork.

These moments were threaded through *Sanctuary's* sometimes unstable development, and created a core of solidarity and hope in a challenging context.

Enacting solidarity and fellowship requires more realistic project scoping (section iii, iv, and vi).

Sanctuary failed to account realistically for its time frame and the availability of artists, causing the collaborative element to operate very differently than anticipated. As the Community and Learning team at Kettle's Yard are fully aware, meaningful relationship building takes time and space. *Sanctuary* claimed that time and space, but the process could have been more respectful of staff, artists, and participants in these were appropriately factored in from the beginning.

A large part of this mismatch stemmed from Issam Kourbaj's huge commitments to *Urgent Archive* and *You Are Not You And Home Is Not Home*. *Sanctuary* indicates that it is unreasonable and improbable to expect artists to deliver meaningful community collaboration alongside the final preparations for a major exhibition.

Participants found *Sanctuary* meaningful in their personal lives, but Kettle's Yard could foster this value more actively (section iv and v).

Many participants reflect sensitively on the conversations that *Sanctuary* sparked in their personal lives. Engagement with contemporary art practice, and especially the choosing of objects and stories to share, proved an effective way to begin discussions that many felt would not otherwise have taken place. As project staff articulate, part of the specialness of community projects are the personal and social journeys with which the activity interweaves. However, many community participants commented that they would have valued the opportunity to bring those conversations into *Sanctuary* itself, by meeting more frequently with other participants, or by being able to invite their friends and family to share their stories, too.

Many participants also cite their admiration for Issam Kourbaj's artistic and community work as an impetus for taking part. Thus, *Sanctuary* successfully demonstrated the meaningfulness of long-term relationships between communities and contemporary artistic practice. However, the lack of contact between the artist and community meant that this relationship was not accessible to newcomers to Kourbaj's work.

Working with members of the North Cambridge community is an energising and rewarding creative challenge for artists (section v).

The careful engagement that Issam Kourbaj and Mourad Kourbaj undertook with the community participants' stories, and their sensitivity to their reflections during creative workshops, ensured that the final artwork was personally meaningful to the community collaborators. Although much of the creative and design work was conducted by the artists alone, many participants reported feeling a strong sense of recognition and ownership in the final piece. Thus, although the relationship between community members and the artists was more distant than anticipated, the artists' skilled and thoughtful engaging with participants prevented this distance from becoming dissonance..

Sanctuary also informed the personal and professional art making of participants and project staff. The community of contemporary artistic practice should be understood holistically; *Sanctuary* resonates through the creative acts of many involved.

Artworks and project outcomes need to be visible to the people to whom they matter, but Kettle's Yard could have amplified *Sanctuary* further (section iii, iv, and v).

Sanctuary's display in Arbury Court Library proved a source of pride and hope for many members of North Cambridge communities. Its permanence, in contrast to the quickly changing exhibition schedule at Kettle's Yard, will allow its meaning and resonances to develop over time and inspire new connections, conversations, and creative acts.

However, while many community participants expressed gratitude to Kettle's Yard for hosting the project, and admiration for its skilful handling, few could identify *Sanctuary*'s relevance to Kettle's Yard as an organisation, or felt that Kettle's Yard had learned from them. Thus, there were missed opportunities to demonstrate to participants that *Sanctuary* was an important project for the institution, as well as for the Library and the artists.

4.b.ii What defines a philosophy of solidarity and an attitude of fellowship?

In arts and cultural institutions, calls for solidarity, fellowship, and coalition have arisen in reaction to the inadequacy of the more familiar, less politically charged concepts of collaboration and consensus. Bernadette Lynch's seminal 2011 report *Whose Cake is it Anyway?* reveals that many community engagement programmes run by arts organisations produce false consensuses, and treat community members as beneficiaries rather than active agents. Such work perpetuates a model in which the institution is seen as the centre and nexus of activity, and the community are peripheral figures understood to learn and benefit from the organisation in a one-way exchange (Lynch, 2011). These anxieties around the potential for genuine exchange and meaningful collaborations between cultural institutions and communities continue to be raised by scholars and practitioners from across disciplines (see, for example, Cornwall, 2004; Marstine, 2013, and Morse, 2021).

In reaction to this exploitative and tokenistic model, current practice often strives to centre solidarity and fellowship. Reflecting on the *Whose Cake* report 10 years later, Lynch concludes that:

For museums to be useful they need to form the vanguard of a new and radical democratic practice, breaking free of their economic and political constraints. It is about practising radical trust both ways, in which we are all learners are active agents in making change happen – within and beyond the institution. It is thus about practising solidarity. (Lynch, 2021: 18).

Lynch's description here of an active learning network that attends both to the institution and the wider community, working within but also transcending familiar constraints, recalls radical pedagogic philosophies, as articulated by bell hooks (2004) among others. hooks' concept of solidarity centres the key dynamics of difference and hope. Difference and diversity, hooks argues, are essential to creating solidarity, because it is only through recognising and understanding points of divergence as well as unity that people can meaningfully relate to and support each other. hooks sees difference as essential to trust and solidarity in a working community:

Lots of people fear encountering difference because they think that honestly naming it will lead to conflict. The truth is our denial of the reality of difference has created ongoing conflict for everyone. ... it will always be vital, necessary for us to know that we are more than our differences, that it is not just what we organically share that can connect us but what we come to have in common because we have done the work of creating community, the unity within diversity, that requires solidarity (hooks, 2004: 109).

For hooks, community arises out of the trust and action that working together in solidarity creates. Crucially, as hooks goes on to argue and Lynch reinforces, such a community must be energised by hope. This hope will be founded on a belief and trust in each members' own agency, and the agency of others, to create the genuine change that the community desires.

For community participant Fanny, solidarity arises specifically through acknowledging difference and sharing generously:

For me, the solidarity is linked to inclusivity, welcoming people, and also the idea of sharing something quite personal.

A staff member also sees sharing as central to solidarity, although emphasises knowledge and learning as well as personal stories:

Sometimes [in a community project] there's no sense of sharing knowledge or sharing practice that will also benefit the community in the long term. ... I think sharing knowledge has more to do with improving community life and being really critical. ... It is about building a sense of community, or empowering the community with that knowledge to do things we've not been able to do otherwise. Perhaps it's an opportunity for them to reflect as well about who they are as a group that comes together in this space. So, being in the spirit of solidarity is about sharing all those things [that are sometimes] reduced to just the feedback form.

These insightful comments reinforce Lynch's call for radical trust and are an important reminder that information sharing and transparency are integral to relationships between institutions and communities. Such sharing – when acted upon visibly and with purpose, beyond 'just the feedback form' – engenders the sort of mutual exchange and criticality that foster agency and meaningful collaboration.

The staff member also reminds us that, alongside concerns for difference and trust, projects also need to attend actively to care. An institution that shares knowledge in order to empower or equip a community is also an institution that understands communities' needs and thinks critically about where they can be met by working together. As Lynch reminds us, true collaboration requires that the institution does not presume to know better than the community, or position itself as an unequivocal source of benefit.

From this brief review of the literature and of reflections of participants, staff, and artists, I suggest that the key qualities of solidarity in this context are:

- Genuine recognition of difference and diversity
- A widely and firmly held belief in the agency and legitimacy of each project member
- A unifying purpose that inspires hope and energises community action
- A spirit of mutual sharing and learning
- A commitment to care

The themes of *Sanctuary* speak clearly to these qualities. The gathering and sharing of diverse stories through the broad concepts of sanctuary and home directly recognises and celebrates difference in experience, and gestures towards the creation of a community energised by active storytelling and exchange. As many participants recognise (see section 4b.iv), there is also a clearly activist message; *Sanctuary* was about creating a space in Cambridge that celebrates and cares for a community united not by shared experiences, but a shared understanding of the value of each other. For Fanny, this idea made an explicit statement about Cambridge as a welcoming and loving place to belong:

The idea that [North Cambridge] is a place where it can be intuitive, someone doesn't have to be an English person living in England, living in Cambridge, to be here. There are different ways of being here. And there's something which I found inclusive and welcoming. The solidarity can be linked to that. It is a way to say 'I also felt: where is my home? What am I doing here?'. When sharing this story with other people, [there is] solidarity in saying that you don't have to forget where you're coming from, you don't have to forget your sense of belonging, to be able to belong here.

...

There is this saying about love. [Love] multiplies in you, the more people you love, there's nothing less for each person, it's multiplying. And the feeling of belonging, for me is kind of the same. I feel I belong.

A staff member also reflects on how the theme accepts difference to build community:

I wanted to get involved because I really liked the theme. ... I feel like you can come together through a shared experience that everyone has, even though they might be quite different. Shared experiences in wherever life has taken you.

In Issam Kourbaj's words, *Sanctuary*:

is an invitation to everyone. There is no hierarchy, none at all. ... The minute you share your story it might touch somebody else. The story becomes a bridge between us. ... It could give us that insight into another person's way of seeing and thinking.

These thoughtful and moving reflections highlight the importance of values in *Sanctuary*, its deep connection to experiences of living in Cambridge, and the centrality of solidarity to enacting these ideas.

4.b.iii What does putting a philosophy of solidarity into practice require of Kettle's Yard?

As described in section 4a, *Sanctuary* was conditioned by competing practical, organisational, and values-based impetuses that were not built entirely on principles of solidarity. Like all organisations seeking solidarity and fellowship with communities, Kettle's Yard strove to embed these qualities in an imperfect and limited practical reality.

A staff member identifies that solidarity was enacted through special 'moments' of care and collaboration. These moments, which they felt occurred most prominently during the creative workshops led by Issam Kourbaj and Mourad Kourbaj, became 'the starting point for discussions' that sparked and redirected the participants' and artists' thinking about the project and its themes. These qualities echo Kettle's Yard's institutional values of creativity and collaboration, and precipitated meaningful exchange, dialogue, and partnership.

I suggest that such moments of solidarity, and the sense of hope and trust that they engendered, characterised *Sanctuary*. Because of the project's extended nature and the occasional long gaps between phases of collaborative activity, these moments were crucial in creating a sense of unity and purpose. In

what follows, I detail some of the moments of solidarity that participants, artists, and staff identify, and consider what made them possible.

Story sharing and photography sessions

For community participants, the first moments of solidarity came during the story sharing and photography sessions. Some reflect on feeling nervous beforehand, and unsure of what to expect:

When I came in ... I was like 'oh my god, am I the only one?' And I was getting stressed.

- Anna

It was a bit difficult for me [not knowing what to expect]. I like to know what's happening. But I was enthusiastic enough that I could kind of override my not knowing.

- Rosanna

I worried everyone would think [my object] was a stupid thing. Or a pointless thing. ... I didn't know if people would understand.

- Rosanna

The fluidity and responsiveness of the project – and the fact that the outcome would be determined together as the work progressed – thus created a lack of clarity that some participants experienced as disconcerting. However, the warm reception and attentive listening that Florencia Nannetti and My Linh Le offered mitigated these concerns and transformed the experience:

That one-to-one, when somebody takes an interest in you, brought a bit of thoughtfulness to the surface that I didn't recognise [in myself] before. It's a nice thing. People paying attention.

- Ann

I loved working with Florencia and My Linh, we were all part of it and making it together. That was fun. Being part of that group was really nice. ... It was really nice to hear everyone's response. ... Everyone understood.

- Rosanna

Making art together

Participants, staff, and artists alike cite the two creative workshops as key moments of solidarity. The process of sharing stories and working on an artwork together was very powerful for many of those involved. A staff member observes that during the workshops, 'everybody became the artist at that moment'. Community participants Ann and Christine reinforce this sense of joyful collaboration:

You could imagine yourself as an artist, because you were taking part in it. You were thinking like an artist.

- Ann

Issam was the leader, but we feel like everybody had played a part in that. And that was a good feeling. Because it doesn't happen that often, but when you do a creative project and as a group that feels quite special.

- Christine

For staff, too, the transformation of the words and images collected by Le and Nannetti represented a moment of trust and excitement. A staff member comments:

I think it's great to bring artists into community projects, because perhaps the artist has a different interpretation or style of working, that members of community haven't thought about, or thought could be art. Maybe that also encourages the community to visit and feel more comfortable within the artistic space as well. So bridging those gaps, bringing artwork into the community in that way and exploring that aspect.

Another reiterates:

I think he shakes the culture a bit. ... There is a culture of working that can be very established. So an artist can shake that a little bit for the better.

For artist Mourad Kourbaj, these workshops were about negotiating how to tell stories that are not often celebrated in Cambridge:

I wanted to celebrate solidarity with people whose stories aren't told. ... And I felt like this project in a very simple way was able to highlight some of those memories and stories and feelings.

I discuss the value and experience of making art together in sections iv and v. For now, I note that these moments of sharing and being listened to as a collective of staff, artists, and participants was highly valuable to all stakeholders, who saw themselves as active agents in a mutually rewarding process.

Sharing stories publicly

Of course, these intimate and skilfully facilitated moments of story sharing and art making were later translated into the public artwork currently on display at Arbury Court Library. Many participants reflect on the sense of vulnerability that having their words and images included in this display provoked:

Being exposed to public view, it's a bit different. ... I think the big public is a bit intimidating.

- Fanny

It has the potential to feel a bit embarrassing ... but it's nice to feel that there's a bond that cuts across different classes, different people who maybe aren't familiar with the library or art galleries.

- Ann

It's quite exposing, but it's worth it.

- Christine

It's a little bit scary, because it's out of your control, and once someone sees it, or has an opinion, you can't really control that image. I was a little bit nervous. But the whole reason I have for getting involved in this and doing things, I've tried a lot harder this year to be part of stuff and realise it's not actually that scary.

- Rosanna

For each of these participants, there was a reward for overcoming the apprehension to take part in *Sanctuary*; publicly taking part in a community that they feel matter to Cambridge (Fanny and Ann), or pursuing personal development by taking manageable risks (Christine and Rosanna). Thus, this collective leap of faith invested into the artwork in the Library demonstrates a moment of solidarity that involves supporting a common goal and believing in other people's agendas and commitments.

Later Conversations

Many community participants also comment on how the project has impacted their own conversations, away from Kettle's Yard, with family and friends. I discuss this finding in more detail in section iv. For now it is worth remembering that, to show solidarity, cultural institutions must accept and enjoy the fact that a project's legacy happens as much in participants' personal lives and it does within the institution.

Thus, for Kettle's Yard, putting a philosophy of solidarity into practice involves taking care to create and celebrate moments in which connection, conversation, and the transformation of thinking can begin to take place. Even in circumstances that did not always foster togetherness or hope, there were significant moments in which these things were achieved, and began to flourish.

4.b.iv What do the communities of North Cambridge find useful or enriching about working with contemporary artist practice?

Planning and expectations

Before I discuss participants' experience of working with contemporary artist practice, I note that the relationship between the members of North Cambridge communities who participated in *Sanctuary* and the artists operated differently than originally intended. A staff member reflects:

I think, when we started the project, I'd hoped, I'd thought it would be delivered in a different way with the artist. And I thought the artists would be more involved with the invitation, with the gathering of material for the outcome, and they weren't. ... Rather than that, they're bringing together [the artwork] at the end. ... So I feel like there's some missed opportunities along the way. We thought we'd built it in, but the artist went in a different direction.

As detailed in section 4a, Issam Kourbaj also reflects on this lost opportunity for more in-depth collaboration between himself and the community, which was precluded by his commitments to the two exhibitions.

As the staff member notes, the truncated time that the artists and community participants spent together meant that 'moments of solidarity were lost'. The change in delivery model also pressured other team

members to invest more time, and work differently, than originally planned. While solidarity and fellowship may have been felt amongst the team in how they responded together to these unexpected circumstances, there was a failure here, perhaps on the parts of both Kettle's Yard and the lead artists, to adequately care for staff by instigating an unrealistic project plan.

A rich experience for community participants

Nonetheless, the involvement of artists was a central and meaningful part of the project for staff and community participants alike. As discussed in section iii, staff members reflect that artist practice is central to creating an environment that is discursive and generative for the organisation and for community participants.

Issam Kourbaj and Mourad Kourbaj's values as artists underpinned *Sanctuary* and provided special moments of connection and collaboration. Photographer My Linh Le's generous and collaborative approach to her practice, and Florencia Nannetti's (herself also an artist) sensitive and caring approach to recording conversations meant that participants continually felt themselves to be part of a collective creative endeavour. Their experiences with artistic practice fall under three broad categories:

Value-driven connection to North Cambridge as a home

Many community participants cited their values around belonging in North Cambridge as central to their desire to get involved, and saw artistic practice as a meaningful way of exploring these ideas. Fanny speaks movingly on her experience of making Cambridge a home, and of how she sees *Sanctuary* as a way to show others that they belong in Cambridge, too:

It is something to arrive in another country, and to be the foreigner, where before you were part of the society, you knew all the codes, you knew all of that. And there is something quite intimidating, and it's difficult to find your place, but to have the kind of project when you are asked to think about your home, your sense of safety, your sense of feeling related and belonging, this sort of thing, and have the possibility to share it. ... I think this project can bring this idea that you can be part of both.

Fanny then considers how the final artwork importantly reflects the diversity of North Cambridge:

I quite like the mosaic of different countries, different types of family, different types of stories. I found it quite open and hopeful. In a moment where things seems to be very much closing down. I think it's quite hopeful to have this kind of mosaic and people bringing their home sanctuary, the home in the same place.

Here, Fanny articulates collaborative artwork, and the public display in Arbury Court Library, as a way to express a solidarity that recognises moments of connection without homogenising experience. She identifies hope as something necessary and often lacking for people arriving in Cambridge. The context of Arbury Court Library's new status as a Library of Sanctuary reinforces the activist role of the artwork; like Fanny, many participants remark on the pride they felt that their local library was taking such steps to welcome people in what they experienced as an increasingly hostile political climate.

The ethos behind *Sanctuary* – which, as community participant Rebecca pointed out, builds on Jim and Helen Ede’s philosophy of providing a warm welcome and a place to explore art with ‘a generosity of spirit’ – proved affirming and galvanising for participants and staff. All those who took part were keen to frame their city as a place that is safe and welcoming for people with similar and different experiences to themselves. The medium of contemporary art proved an exciting and meaningful method of communicating these values to a wider local public.

Art as a prompt for personal and social exploration

In line with these values, many participants found that the process of engaging in contemporary artist practice catalysed discussion and reflection beyond the project. These conversations deepened their relationships with people in their lives, and created opportunities for new forms of connection.

Anna reflects sensitively on how telling the story of her object opened up space to have new discussions with her family:

I just don't talk about [the story of my object] and I don't know why. When I started thinking about the object, I felt, ‘Oh, the story is important to me. So why am I not talking about it?’ So this reflection was interesting. I now share the stories, maybe I'll share more about it.

...

[After I spoke to my aunts about *Sanctuary*,] they started talking about their memories about my grandma, which they never told me of, or they had new reflections about the relationship with their mother. So it was this interesting intergenerational experience for me. Connection, exchanging memories, really. And I realised how many memories this object possesses, that we have.

Fanny’s reflections echo Anna’s experience:

To have this link to [my grandmother] and to know that [the object I brought,] the pullover she knitted, is going to have a picture of it in a museum. There is a sense that I gave my grandmother a bit of eternity.

...

I talked about the object with my daughter. ... She knew I wore it, but she didn't know the long line it's coming from. So I think it's just allowed the putting of words on something which was obvious for me, but I was the only one to carry the history of it. So I think it was quite meaningful.

The reflective process that began with the story sharing sessions, then, created resonances throughout participants’ lives. They engendered meaningful conversations with loved ones, and more conscious relationships to the objects they brought.

The artistic outputs, both online and in the Library, were an important part of these processes. Anna and Fanny each note that having something to share, especially the link to the sound art and photography, were essential to beginning these precious conversations in a soft, gentle way.

A trusting and privileged relationship with the artists and staff, building on pre-existing connections

For many participants, a large part of the safety they felt in sharing their stories was due to the efforts of project staff and artists. I have discussed the impact of Le and Nannetti's warmth and skilled listening, and the reputation and generosity of Issam Kourbaj and Mourad Kourbaj also helped participants feel confident in the sometimes vulnerable way in which *Sanctuary* positioned them.

Many participants cited Issam Kourbaj's empathetic practice and reputation as a member of the Cambridge community as an important part of their trust in *Sanctuary*:

I'm delighted [to be working with Issam]. It's an honour, in fact. I've supported him in his work previously ... which was really powerful. So I am very happy for him to use [my contributions to the project] as he sees fit.

- Rebecca

I've met Issam many times so I feel fine to be included in the artwork. I know what he's like, I know what his practice is like, and this seems like a classic Issam thing to do, actually. It's really personal and caring in its theme.

- Christine

As I examined in section iii, the generosity and warmth that the artists enacted during the two creative workshops was an integral part of feeling safe in the project. Thus, despite staff perceptions of distance and potential dissonance between artists and community participants, the quality of Kourbaj's reputation as a facilitator as well as an artist hugely mitigated this disconnection.

Of course, these positive interactions were experienced only by those participants who were able to attend the workshops, and were more deeply felt by those who already knew of Issam Kourbaj's work. Those who had no pre-existing connection to Kourbaj and who could not attend the workshops felt unsure of how to talk or think about the role of artistic practice. Thus, *Sanctuary* successfully demonstrated the meaningfulness of long-term relationships between communities and contemporary artistic practice, but did not make that relationship accessible to newcomers to Kourbaj's work.

A missed opportunity for community and connection

These missed opportunities to connect community members to the artist in new ways are part of a larger failure of *Sanctuary* to build a community around its activity. While Christine's observation that 'it doesn't happen that often, but when you do a creative project and as a group that feels quite special' reflects positively on the two creative workshops, these workshops were highly time-limited and inaccessible to many participants. Because of limited staff and artist availability, the times and locations of these workshops were decided by the project team and could not be repeated or relocated to suit community participants.

Participants who were not involved with the creative workshops noticed the lack of connection they felt with others taking part in *Sanctuary*. Anna reflects on the desire to build a community around the process of thinking and sharing about objects:

I feel that it was supposed to be a community oriented project, but in the end, I don't feel that. ... And this project has really good grounds for creating community around Kettle's Yard, who could talk about art and how everyday objects could be art and how special they are. So I think it has some potential.

Fanny also considers how she would have liked to involve her family, with whom she had many conversations about *Sanctuary*, with the project itself:

I think I'm going to ask [my children] what they would bring. It's a very nice thing to think about. And as a mother, I would love to know what my kids would take with them. I'm starting to be curious now. I think this is maybe a missed opportunity in this project ... to extend to other members of the family.

Sanctuary, then, felt to many participants like the beginning of a creative community that never fully arrived. Thus, while the values of solidarity and fellowship underline the project and were tangible at many moments, the potential for meaningful community action that some participants and staff anticipated was not realised.

4.b.v How can community participant knowledge and experience inform and bring value to contemporary artist practice?

The energising themes of *Sanctuary*

Like the community participants and staff, the artists involved in *Sanctuary* found the themes of homemaking and storytelling compelling and energising. Issam Kourbaj recognises that the artwork tells stories that are written in an accessible, nuanced way:

Everybody has a story and it will be really nice to share it and to have it in the Library, a place where research is existing in books, but actually to communicate with people around. I thought this will be a very nice approach. I felt that it is very democratic.

Kourbaj links this approach to his previous work with the communities of North Cambridge, and a commitment to the value of learning from others that is embedded in his practice:

There are so many different voices in Cambridge. ... so many very beautiful stories. ... the previous projects were incredibly powerful and touching. .. whenever I run workshops and wherever I go, whenever I exhibit, ... shines new lights. Like my theory, when you throw yourself to the water, you start swimming.

Kourbaj also grounds this approach explicitly within Kettle's Yard's ethos:

I know of Jim Ede that he was really interested in bringing people from the community inside his house to share with them. ... To my mind, Kettle's Yard is really building bridges to the community, and art has that power to be a tool of communication. I feel that this is the essence of Kettle's yard.

Staff members and community participants who are themselves artists found the themes and process energising for their personal and professional practices:

I'm really interested in working with the topic of home. It's one of my research topics as an artist myself of outside work with organisations. And I find it really inspiring to see what people's responses are, and the different reflections that come out of working with different communities on that topic.

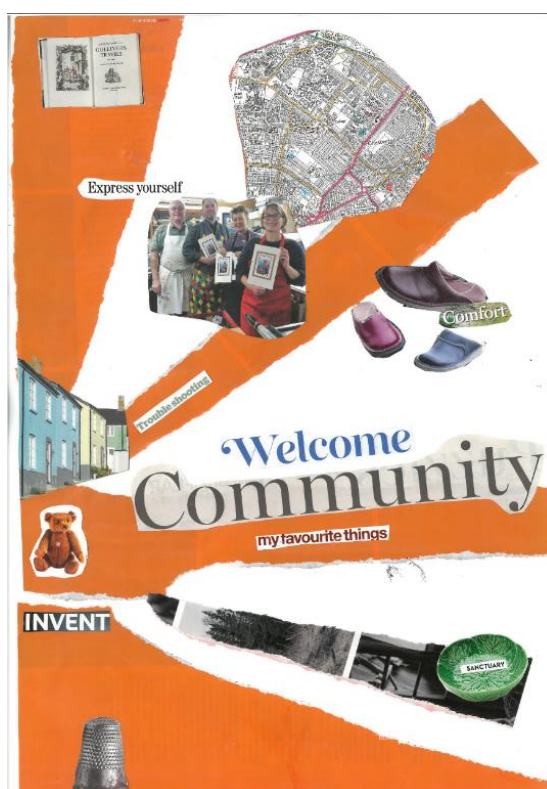
- Staff member

I was very interested to see for myself the objects that the members of the North Cambridge community would bring. And just interested in seeing how the project would develop in that way as well. And exploring my own thoughts about home in that role.

- Staff member

Some participants also reflect on how the project inspired them to engage creatively with the subject matter. The contemporary artistic practice, then, that developed around *Sanctuary* should be viewed inclusively and holistically, incorporating not only the designated project artists, but also members of the team and community who explored the themes on their own terms, whether as part of ongoing artistic work or in more informal acts of making.

Christine's collage reflecting her experiences of the project is just one example of the creative moments that *Sanctuary* inspired:



The relationship between artistic practice and life in the communities of North Cambridge

As I detail in section iv, the value that participants who had encountered Issam Kourbaj previously identify in returning to his work demonstrates the intersection between artistic practice and participant knowledge and experience. Socially engaged artistic practice, even when realised more distantly than anticipated, reveals to the artist the relevance of their work to the social worlds in which they operate. A staff member hopes that Kourbaj sees how his practice has long held meaning for many in North Cambridge:

Maybe it's helped him understand the impact that he has as an artist that those people [who have met him or seen his art before] are like 'oh is it's an Issam project? Ok, yeah, I'm going to be part of it.' So I think, I hope, that he takes pride in that, and he recognises the impact that he's had on these people's lives.

Articulating empathy and solidarity with the community through art

The practice of engaging with community members also challenged the artists to approach their work differently. Mourad Kourbaj, who began working on the project shortly before the second creative workshop, reflects that collaborating with community participants, and being accountable to them, challenged him to approach his own practice in a new way:

An object maybe at first glance doesn't immediately capture your attention. But then you listen to the story. ... It's a really nice thing to remind people that so many objects have so many stories, and something that's meaningful to one person isn't necessarily as meaningful to another, but this felt like a good opportunity for people to share those stories. For objects that mean something to them to then mean something to the wider audience.

Kourbaj found this work to be an interesting creative and collaborative challenge. He considers the process as a three-way system that valued each stakeholder and their expertise:

Having [the community members'] input in the design process felt like it was a collaboration rather than a one-way system. ... [It was] a three-way system between the organisers, the participants, and the artists and designers, so it didn't feel like one was dominating the others, it felt like it fluid process between the three.

Kourbaj then reflects on the space his own work occupied in this system:

I feel like I've learned. Just practising how to translate [community] stories in a visual way. ... It was nice to have [the themes of home and sanctuary] as the starting point and then link them all together. But also add my own idea as a designer into this process. And I was trying to represent that through colour, and through translating the stories into the form of colour and the form of composition. The final panels have the quotes of the participant of the participants as part of the soundboard, which I feel like is another engaging way of interpreting the stories. And so I felt like that was a learning process for me.

Kourbaj's response to this challenge in the final sound panel artwork, and in the accompanying postcards, demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that his work was meaningful to the people involved.

The postcards responded directly to the stories many participants told of people to whom they felt deep connections, but could not be with physically. They thus formed a means for participants to invite others into the activity on *Sanctuary* on their own terms. Kourbaj explains:

Suddenly, those stories that may only have been based here, have suddenly been transported somewhere else. And then that person that receives the postcards tells their friends, and we never know what's going to happen. ... We are suddenly opening the door to so many people to these stories, to sharing them and encouraging other people to maybe share their stories beyond this specific project, inspired by what we've been doing.

Christine and Ann share this enthusiasm, and plan to use the postcards as 'a way to make a connection, maybe with a friend you haven't spoken to in a while' or 'with someone having a difficult time.'

Sanctuary, then, demonstrates how the knowledge and experience of the people of North Cambridge can inform and challenge the work of professional artists, and contribute to the development of a creative and value-driven community.

4.b.vi How can the knowledge and experience of North Cambridge communities inform exhibition-making at Kettle's Yard, and how can this contribution be made visible?

Museum scholar Claire Bishop notes that the care and investment made in participatory cultural projects is often intangible:

[Participatory projects] tend to value what is invisible: a group dynamic, a social situation, a change of energy, a raised consciousness (Bishop, 2012: 6).

Thus, Bishop contends that:

Participatory art demands that we find new ways of analysing art that are no longer linked solely to visibility, even though form remains a crucial vessel for communicating meaning (Bishop, 2012: 27).

Bishop's observations speak to the fact that many participants cite relationships and conversations – with staff, artists, each other, and in their personal lives – as the most meaningful part of *Sanctuary* (see section iii and iv). They also highlight the difficulty of making the knowledge and experience of North Cambridge communities visible, when so much of the work is defined by invisible processes of care, collaboration, and negotiation.

Visible to whom?

Sanctuary's three tangible outcomes – the soundboards in Arbury Court Library, the online photography and sound art display, and the postcards – are highly visible to visitors of Arbury Court Library, users of Kettle's Yard website, and anyone with whom someone shares a postcard. As I discussed in section iii, this level of public and long-term visibility caused some apprehension or feelings of vulnerability among participants, but was also a source of excitement, pride, and connection to Cambridge:

I've spent a lot of time in Arbury. The children were at school there. I haven't been to the Library for ages, but I used to be in there a lot. ... So it'd be really nice if we could help go and see this work together because I'm part of it.

- Christine

I think there's something about how it's going to be part of Cambridge, it's going to be part of this city, which I found is more important than I thought it would be for me. ... Now I'm quite pleased, because we made the choice to stay here when I didn't think we would, that you have this opportunity to leave something here.

- Fanny

The feeling that something will be visible in the community, and for a long time, is important to participants wishing to deepen their connection to their city and neighbourhood, and to demonstrate that North Cambridge is a welcoming and diverse place.

Mourad Kourbaj reflects on Arbury Court Library as somewhere rooted in, and serving, North Cambridge, rather than the more transient galleries of Kettle's Yard:

I think it's more important for [the artwork] to be a permanent part of the local community, rather than a temporary part of a gallery. Because then it means that it's impacting more people who it should impact. And maybe people who aren't part of Arbury won't know about it, or won't know as much about it, but as long as it's benefiting the people who go to that Library, or who are part of that community, then I feel like that should be the main priority.

Kourbaj's comments on time and transience here illuminate the dissonance between how galleries operate and how North Cambridge communities operate. Temporary exhibitions and displays in a traditional format are unable, in Fanny's words, to 'leave a mark' or 'bit of eternity' in that community.

Staff also comment on the appropriateness of Arbury Court Library as a place to celebrate North Cambridge communities:

If you're not part of the North Cambridge community, then will people go out to look for the artwork? But are we trying to engage people beyond the community itself in North Cambridge? Because if that's not the case, it's in the right place to be displayed because it's within the community in the library.

- Staff member

I think in the community, maybe it'll be more visible than at the museum, because Arbury Court Library has so many users weekly and is right at the centre, in the hub of activity in Arbury.

- Staff member

To enact solidarity, it is important for Kettle's Yard to embed their resources into community-owned projects and spaces. Kettle's Yard have here fulfilled a key criteria of solidarity by sharing in North Cambridge's development. It should be remembered, too, that the legacies of Sanctuary will continue to unfurl, and will not be necessarily visible to Kettle's Yard, or even the community participants. As a staff member predicts:

There'll be conversations and new connections and possibly new friendships formed. And that's the nice thing about these projects, the creation of new communities through them. .. Now Issam [is part of the community] going forward, which is exciting, and Kettle's Yard is part of that going forward, it's literally built into the building. And there'll be other conversations around it. Other creatives will go there and be inspired by it. ... I think there will be those ongoing moments of people coming together and building communities around the artwork. And I think that's exciting.

The pressure of exhibition-making

Sanctuary was not an experiment in community or community-informed exhibition making, and the community participants had no involvement in Issam Kourbaj's exhibition *Urgent Archive*. As I have discussed, the delivery and output of *Sanctuary* were strongly conditioned by Kourbaj's commitment to that exhibition, and these commitments curtailed his input into the project. Arbury Court Library proved a relevant and meaningful place for the artwork to be displayed. It was be highly visible, for a long time, to the people to whom it matters.

However, the correctness of Arbury Court Library as a place to celebrate North Cambridge does not mean that Kettle's Yard itself could not host meaningful community input into exhibitions or displays. In fact, many community participants identified a missed opportunity to engage more with Kettle's Yard as an institution, or as a place for display. When I asked community members what they felt Kettle's Yard had learned from the process of collaborating with them, none were able to make a suggestion. This uncertainty indicates that the development in their relationship with Kettle's Yard as an institution, beyond individual project staff, was minimal.



Photo credit: Helen Dickman, 2024

5 Conclusion

Sanctuary was an exciting, meaningful, and generative project for all stakeholders, proudly demonstrating North Cambridge's qualities as an inclusive, creative, and accepting place. The conscious embedding of solidarity and fellowship into the project by staff through the themes, working practices, and a willingness to learn and adapt together brought myriad benefits. For the members of North Cambridge communities who took part, it was a chance to reflect on their experiences of home and sanctuary, and to share those ideas in a place that matters to them. For the artists, it energised new working practices and emphasised the value of their work to those living in Cambridge. For Kettle's Yard, it deepened relationships with the communities in which it is situated, and opened space for new dialogue that continues to play out. Solidarity and fellowship were interwoven throughout the project, creating moments of connection and collective meaning-making, and identifying space where these philosophies can flourish in future.

Following *Sanctuary*, Kettle's Yard could consider how it can foster collaborations between artists and communities that bring the qualities of solidarity and fellowship: genuine recognition of difference and diversity; a belief in agency and legitimacy of all project stakeholders; a unifying and energising purpose; a spirit of mutual sharing and learning; and a commitment to care. These qualities, which already underly so much of the Community and Learning team's work, could be more consciously embedded in institutional and administrative practices at all stages of a project through small adjustments and points of reflection.



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