**COUM Hull UK City of Culture 2017**

**Project Plan**

**Introduction:**

The opening season of Hull 2017 is ‘Made in Hull’ and is an opportunity to re-visit, key stories of the city in new and interesting ways. It is also the opportunity to begin to tell stories of Hull that may not be so well known to its residents or the wider public, stories that will help reposition the city in terms of its contribution to culture, stories like the formation of COUM Transmissions and it’s evolution into Throbbing Gristle, the genre defying live art, noise terrorists that helped define the l1970’s counter-culture and especially the two lead creative forces in both these groups, Genesis P-Orridge and Cosey Fanni Tutti and their relationship to Hull.

**Background COUM Transmissions**

COUM Transmissions were a music and performance art collective which existed from 1969 through to 1976. Founded in Hull they were heavily influenced by the ethos of the Dada art movement and group such as Fluxus as well as radical youth counter-culture and revolutionary movements from around the world. They were openly confrontational and controversial; they were pioneers in terms of live art and experimental music making, a practice that may have seemed at odds with the relatively quiet setting of northern coastal city removed from any ‘art world’ links. Their art was wilfully subversive as was their lifestyle and the two often bled into each other.

COUM Transmissions was a collective based around the post-hippy ideals, taking inspiration from the Trans media Exploration Commune in North London and was made up from an ever evolving and rotating membership that included both intellectual and criminal elements with the leading members of Genesis P-Orridge and Cosey Fanni Tutti at its core.

After dropping out of studies at the university of Hull (once having won poetry prize presented by Larkin) Genesis P-Orridge (then Neil Megson) left Hull for a period – living in London communes, working as a clerk in the family business to return after experiencing a vision on a family holiday where h/er “became disembodied and heard the words COUM Transmissions” thus COUM was born.

The name COUM being undefined and like Dada or Mertz open to interpretation.

The first works staged by COUM were impromptu musical gigs at various pubs around Hull, COUMS music was anarchic and improvised with performances often theatrical, melding the burgeoning discipline of live and sonic art.

The defining moment for COUM was the founding of the HO HO Funhouse a commune in the Fruit Market area of the city (now the car park for C4DI). This former warehouse became the focus for the regions counter-culture and a communal home to an assortment of criminals, artists, musicians, intellectuals, fashion designers and underground music zine producers, it was also home to Christine Carol Newby who came to the Ho Ho Funhouse having been thrown out of her Hull family home by her father. Like Genesis she adopted a nom-de-guerre, becoming Cosey Fanni Tutti in a joking reference to Mozart .This became COUMs most fertile period, with performances across the region courting controversy and a number of police investigations into decency. It also saw the only release of their one recoded track (Dry Blood Tampax) and begin a series of projects funded through various arts council support.

Running parallel with the development of punk, COUM became anti-artists, celebrating the non-musicianship in a statement against the overblown and pompous [progressive rock which dominated the then pop culture. Key projects at this time were the founding of a fictitious school of art based around Genesis interest in infantislm – L’ecole de L’;art infantile ( staged as part of Oxfor Universtty’s May festival) The Ministry of Antisocial Insecurity and various performances/ installations at Hull Arts Centre and Ferens Gallery and played a key role in Hull City Council’s ‘Fanfare for Europe’ Festival celebrating UKs entry into the European Union in 1973.

**Local impact:**

COUM embodied the spirit of creative expression and experimentation that inspired decades long tradition of live art and multimedia performance in the city, notably through the work of Hull Time Based Arts and individuals such as Paul Burwell.

**Global Impact:**

The Prostitution show, staged in the ICA in 1976 was a key moment in 20th century art history, the group were decried in parliament as ‘Wreakers of Civilisation” and went on to form Throbbing Gristle, credited with the invention of Industrial Music enjoying global success in varying guises and solo projects.

**The Exhibition:**

This will be the opening exhibition for 64 Humber Street, the new contemporary visual arts space for the city. The venue will be owned, ran and curated by Hull 2017 it will be a space that helps develop audiences for contemporary visual arts in the city in anticipation of the Turner Prize and it will also host significant exhibitions in their own right. This opening exhibition is designed as a statement of intent, it will uncover a story the city has not yet told.

The key rationale to the exhibition is the celebration and exploration of the living legacy of COUM and in particular the artist Cosey Fanni Tutti and Genesis P-Orridge. Although te main body of the exhibition will be made from artefacts it will not be a museum show, the continuing legacy of COUM will be represented through an associated live programme featuring artists who best embody the spirit of COUM, there will be talks, in conversation style events and the publication of an accompanying catalogue featuring series of new commissions exploring the contemporary legacy of COUM.

**Exhibition Content:**

The material specifically comprises typed and annotated manifestos, publicity material (some commercially printed), objects used for performance, mail art items and miscellaneous material more difficult to categorise, for instance personal correspondence between COUM members or between COUM and their public following around the world.

Whilst these generic categorisations will not be used to determine the structure of the exhibition layout, they will determine the mode of display.

The majority of ephemeral items will require vitrines, however some might be framed for hanging on the wall. Some exhibition material will be generated digitally for display, for instance key iconographic imagery which lends itself to reproduction.

Items displayed will be catalogued numerically and captioned using labels. Where deemed appropriate by the curators, extended captioning co-authored by Cosey Fanni Tutti and Andrew Wheatley, Cabinet will be carried. These short texts will tend to be didactic, providing contextual factual and anecdotal information.

The chronology of events will be clearly registered up until the cessation of COUM in 1976, when Throbbing Gristle was founded at the ICA within the exhibition *Prostitution*.

The extent of the vitrine and wall display will be tailored to the available space at 64 Humber Street.

The display will, by and large, adopt the mannerism of a museological display.

**Curating Process**

It is assumed that the scope and content of the exhibition will be determined by Cosey Fanni Tutti and Andrew Wheatley. This work has been calculated and costed accordingly.

The work of cataloguing the COUM material held in Cosey Fanni Tutti’s archive is considered as a discrete exercise and a prerequisite for the organisation of this exhibition. 40 days cataloguing, scanning and photographing the material is assumed.

**Partnerships**

Andrew Wilson, Senior Curator, Tate Britain has offered assistance and access to Genesis P-Orridge’s paper archive. Specific loans will be determined and early loan requests made as Genesis’s collection of material has still not been formally archived by Tate. A preliminary list of possible material has been drawn up by Andrew Wheatley and Cosey Fanni Tutti.

It is envisaged that material will be sought from additional sources as the research ensues.

The Quietus, an online cultural magazine will work with Cabinet Gallery, Cosey Fanni Tutti and Serious to curate a programme of live performance which will celebrate the contemporary and continuing legacy of COUM.

**Public Events**

Beyond the opening exhibition event, at least one public conversation is proposed within the setting of the exhibition, between Cosey Fanni Tutti and Andrew Wheatley. However, there might be scope for an additional public event through the exhibition’s duration as a consequence of our research.

**Events Programming**

The Quietus, represented by Sophie Coletta and Luke Turner, will be putting together two programmes of live events to bookend the exhibition, to be hosted at Fruit and 64 Humber St for the opening and closing of the public exhibition. Ideally these events will be put on for free to the public.

The details of these events, including performers will be co-ordinated in conjunction with Cosey Fanni Tutti and Cabinet. They will tie in with the public events as part of a curated evening of live programming provisionally at Fruit.

The approach will be to represent both the history and legacy of COUM by presenting artists, mainly musicians, but also potentially visual artists or performance artists who work across various disciplines.

They will either have a personal link to the city of Hull, or will work within similar creative frameworks. This may be through existing work, newly commissioned, or collaborative pieces.

**Publication**

The budget proposed includes a provisional sum for an illustrated publication. This will allow a diverse number of voices and readings of not only the archival material, but other legacies COUM and TG have precipitated.

By no means definitive or exhaustive, possible authors for commissioned texts who might be considered include John Doran, Russell Cuzner, Sophie Coletta, Kris Krauss, Robert Barry and Jonathan Meades. Some of the text generated from the exhibition by Cosey Fanni Tutti might also be adapted, as well as writings from other members of COUM.

Designers being considered include Zak Keyes Studio.

**Promotion**

Publicising this historically unprecedented exhibition might benefit from trade journal advertising, for instance art magazines such as Frieze and Artforum.

It would also be the intention of the curators to prime previews and well positioned editorial ahead of the exhibition in specialist and sympathetic journals.

The Quietus will also provide a platform for promoting the programmed events and exhibition, both through planned features in the lead up, and through allocated advertising space. With a monthly traffic of 400,000 unique users per month and 1.5 million page impressions, this should prove very beneficial.

**Timelines**

* Cabinet and Queitus contracted – W/C 29th feb 2016
* Archiving commences – W/C 28th March
* Live artists and new commissions contracted w/c 20th June
* Writers commissioned W/C 20th June
* Press launch – 3rd Sep
* Exhibition plan agreed – W/C 12th Sep
* Publication finalised and to print W/C 28th Nov
* Install W/C 28th Nov
* Exhibition Open and Opening event 31st December 2016