

DOES THE IT STICK





Type of output:
Exhibition

by
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Left: *DOES THE IT STICK*
(installation view)

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SUMMARY

DOES THE IT STICK was a project at Bloomberg SPACE, London, which interrogated the function of this exhibition space and Bloomberg's relationship to contemporary art.

The project sought to challenge visitors' conventional experience and expectations of the Bloomberg SPACE; to explore and challenge the space's relationship to information in regards to notions of power and transparency; and to produce an artwork that expands limited understandings of the category by containing a multiplicity of approaches and forms including curatorial strategies.

The project is framed by ideas of institutional critique and the notion of antagonism as a relational device within recent contemporary art practice. The project also engages with current models within curatorial and institutional practice (such as Eastside Projects and Liverpool Biennale).

The project employed a number of strategies and devices to explore the research questions. Certain elements from a previous project that responded to a regeneration area within Newcastle (*DOES THE IT FIT*, Stephenson Works, 2013) were transposed into Bloomberg SPACE. This included a long narrative text, photo-works and a monumental figurative sculpture/structure. This strategy allowed the project to address aspects of power, information and rhetoric without explicitly confronting the Bloomberg brand. Other methods within the artwork involved the curating and re-positioning of previous Bloomberg SPACE commissions, the consideration of 'exhibition information' as part of the artwork, the production of a figurative reception desk positioned within the space and the curation of a number of events that took place within the wider Bloomberg building.

The project was co-commissioned by Studio Voltaire and Bloomberg. A poster, that drew on the strategies mentioned above, was disseminated as part of the project. Thorough documentation of the project exists on both the Studio Voltaire and Bloomberg websites.

TIMELINE

DOES THE IT STICK took place at the Bloomberg SPACE, London from 17th April to 15th June, 2014. The project was funded through a £35,000 award from Bloomberg.

The commission included a studio residency at Studio Voltaire and a sequence of research trips to the Bloomberg building (01/03/14 to 15/06/14) during which some of the strategies and approaches were developed.

Below and Left:
DOES THE IT STICK
(installation view)



RESEARCH CHALLENGE

In 2014 Bloomberg invited a number of contemporary art organisations in London, including Studio Voltaire, to work with them on a series of new commissions for the Bloomberg SPACE. Studio Voltaire, in turn, invited Tatham and O'Sullivan to undertake this commission having had direct experience of working with the artists over three previous projects; an ambitious sculptural installation in 2005, an off site-project in 2006 and a theatre work in 2012.

Studio Voltaire approached Tatham and O'Sullivan with a comprehensive understanding of their practice and proposed the commission as an opportunity for the practice to critically explore the context of the commission. The commission therefore provided an opportunity to develop an artwork that would disrupt the conventions normally associated with this kind of a commission.



Right: *DOES THE IT STICK*
(installation view)

CONTEXT

The collaborative practice of Tatham and O'Sullivan was instigated in 1995 and has been on-going for the last 25 years. The practice has submitted Research Outputs for the previous three Research Assessment exercises/frameworks and the current submission builds on this history of practice as research. A central and on-going concern within the collaboration is how such a practice can question notions of individual authorship. All elements of the conceptualisation, production and negotiation of the project are co-authored. Such collaborative and collective practice is becoming increasingly relevant as an antidote to hierarchical structures within contemporary art (De Watcher, 20117 and Burrows, 2010).

DOES THE IT STICK is a development and re-configuration of a project, *DOES THE IT FIT*, that took place the previous year (2013) in Newcastle. Taken together these two projects were a significant development for the practice, in the sense that there was an explicit inclusion of context as an active component within the methodology. Both projects also involved the curation of other artworks, and events, within the structure of a single complex work. Other aspects of the methodology drew on existing strategies within the practice, but developed these in relationship to the Bloomberg context. The detailed development of this methodology is elaborated further in the 'Methods and Processes' section of this portfolio.

DOES THE IT STICK is situated within the field of site and context specific contemporary art practice. The project is framed by the histories of institutional critique and conceptual art and builds on such critical practice. In particular it considers strategies of antagonism as a device within contemporary art practice, as a departure from more convivial forms of relationality (Bourriard, 2002, Bishop, 2004 and Hirshhorn, 2011). It also concerns itself with the re-positioning of the object, and figuration, as active agents in this. The work is relevant within debates concerning the functionality and value of contemporary art practice (both practitioners and theoreticians). However, as an artwork made for a public context, it is also relevant and of value to a wider audience.

METHODS AND PROCESSES

The project employed a number of methods, processes and strategies to undertake its research aims. These included:

- The curation, or positioning, of existing Bloomberg art commissions within the structure of the artwork. The large scale spray-painted cosmic wall painting by Gary Webb, *X-7* (2014) was retained in the space from the previous exhibition and the series of eight photo-works were hung on top of this. The seating installation, *Somehow* (2012) by Tobias Rehberger was also re-positioned from a back space into the exhibition space.

This re-positioning was purposively irreverent and provocative in order to disrupt the normal conventions of such commissions retaining a sense of autonomy from each other. The foregrounding of this strategy was also an attempt to bring together curatorial and artistic processes within a single, complex artwork.

- The disruption of site-specific conventions in the form of figurative structures that both confronted the space and the viewer. The large figurative wall and reception desk were produced and positioned to disrupt the normal exhibiting conventions of this space and return it to a sense of an entrance foyer. The wall structure 'spoke' to the viewer in a reversal of conventional viewer-to-object agency.



Right: *DOES THE IT STICK*
(detail of desk structure)

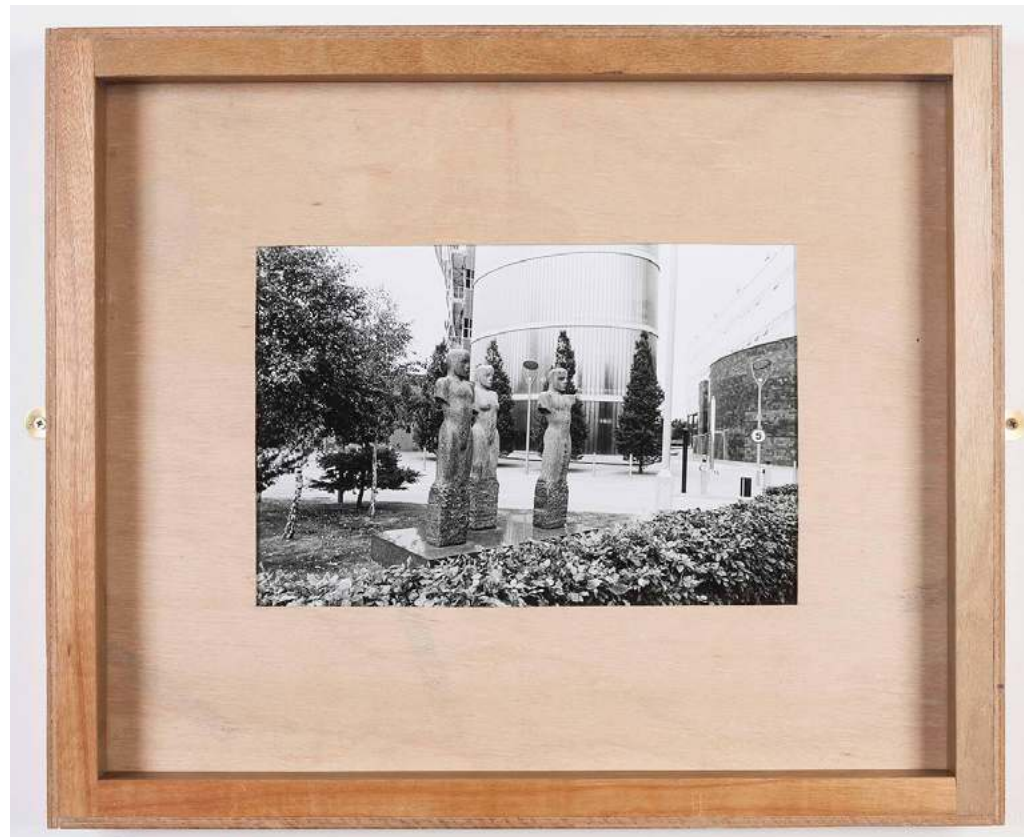
- Certain elements were transposed, and adapted, from a previous project that responded to a regeneration area within Newcastle (*DOES THE IT FIT*, Stephenson Works, 2013).

The text ‘DOES THE IT FIT’ was constructed from found information, which built a cumulative narrative that questioned the rhetoric often surrounding regeneration and contemporary art’s role within this process. The spoken narrative text was purposively recorded in a simulated ‘Geordie’ accent in order to introduce, but not resolve, notions of ‘regionalism’.



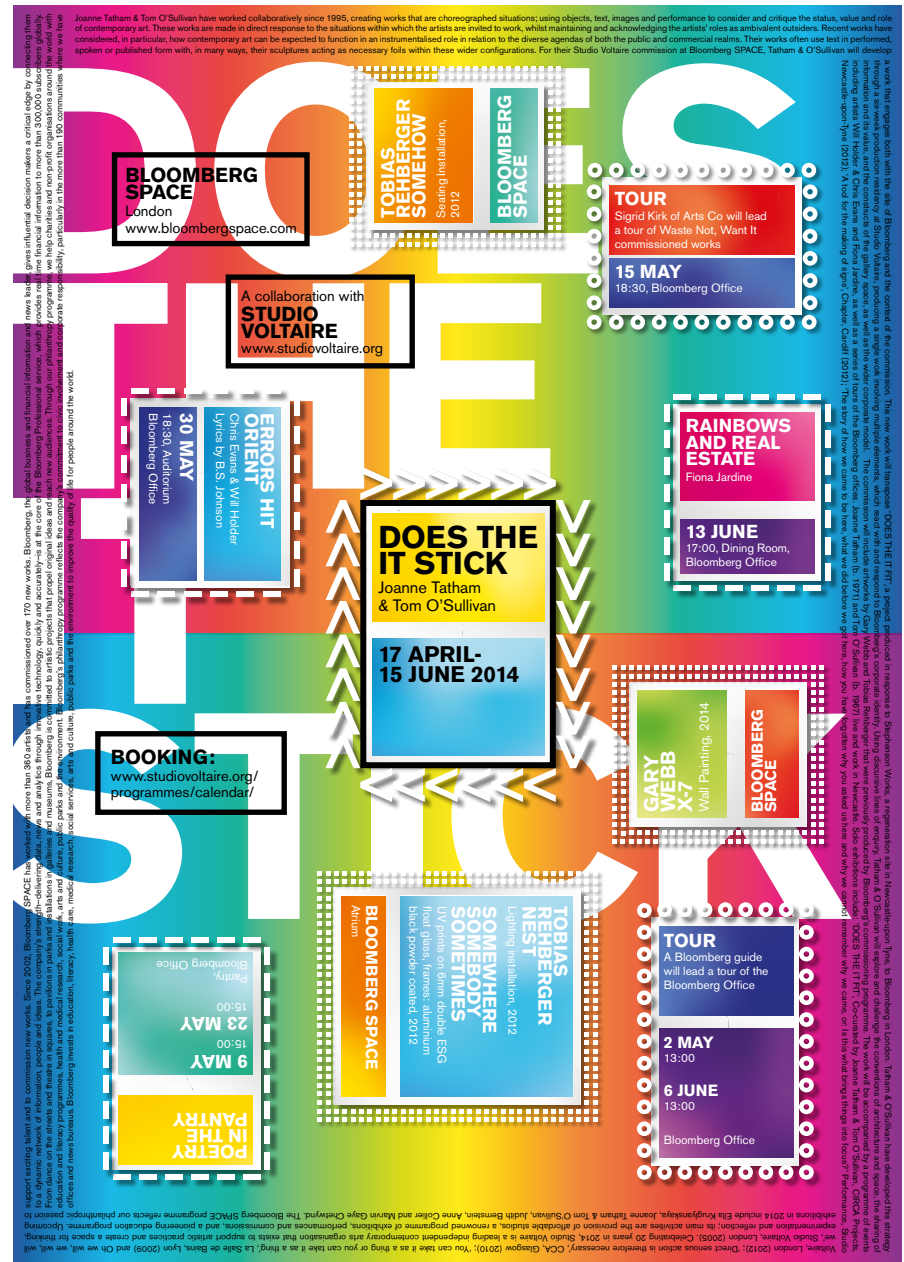
Above: *DOES THE IT STICK*
(texts available to visitors)

- The photo-works were made up of analogue printed black and white photographs within hand-made bees-waxed plywood frames. The pictures were of public spaces within Newcastle that had an oblique relationship to the text and so could not easily be read as a 'photo essay'. The hand-made labour evident in the construction was a strategy to foreground care and attention in the production and display of such images. This particular materiality of the photo-works also allowed for an anachronistic charge in the corporate context of the Bloomberg SPACE.



Right: *DOES THE IT STICK*
(detail of photo-work)

- The poster was produced as another intervention into Bloomberg SPACE. It was designed with the in-house Bloomberg design team, utilising the Bloomberg brand colours, fonts and formats, but disrupting the normal conventions as to how these are employed. For example, utilising punctuation as a framing device and formatting text blocks in an irregular and irreverent manner.
- The artwork also involved the positioning of a number of events that took place during the duration of the exhibition. The poster was designed in such a way to represent this complex aspect of the artwork – and provide a timetable guide for visitors. All the events were curated to involve a degree of disruption or agency in relation to the context. For example, readings of experimental poetry were programmed to happen within the Bloomberg café in order to produce exaggerated dissonance within such heavily branded surroundings.



Right: *DOES THE IT STICK*
(poster)

- Interpretation material was produced as an integral part of the artwork. This involved the construction of a text between two fictional visitors (An Architect and an Intern) to the Bloomberg Space. This was available – together with the poster and ‘DOES THE IT FIT’ text – on the reception desk as positioned ‘Exhibition information.’

Below: *DOES THE IT STICK*
(detail of desk structure)



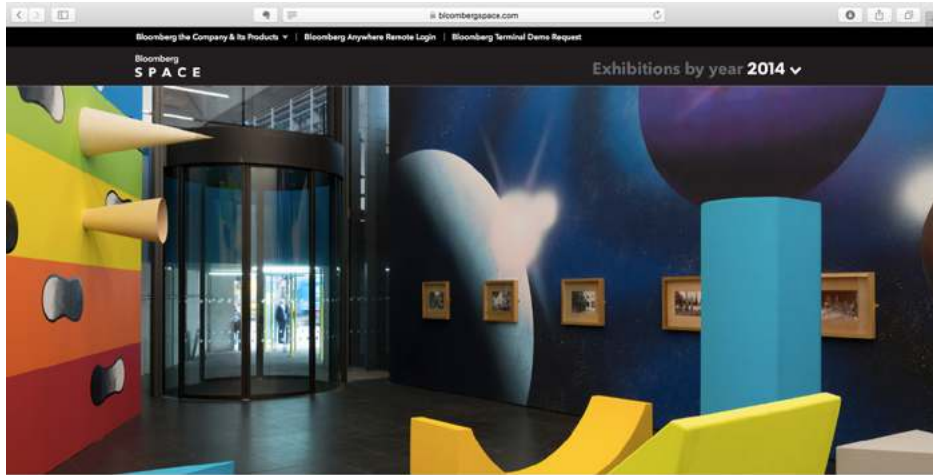
DISSEMINATION

DOES THE IT STICK was a public exhibition and as such was directly disseminated through the visitor experience. The visitor had the opportunity to pick up and retain the interpretation material that was an integral part of the project. The exhibition was widely advertised through the channels available both to Bloomberg and Studio Voltaire.

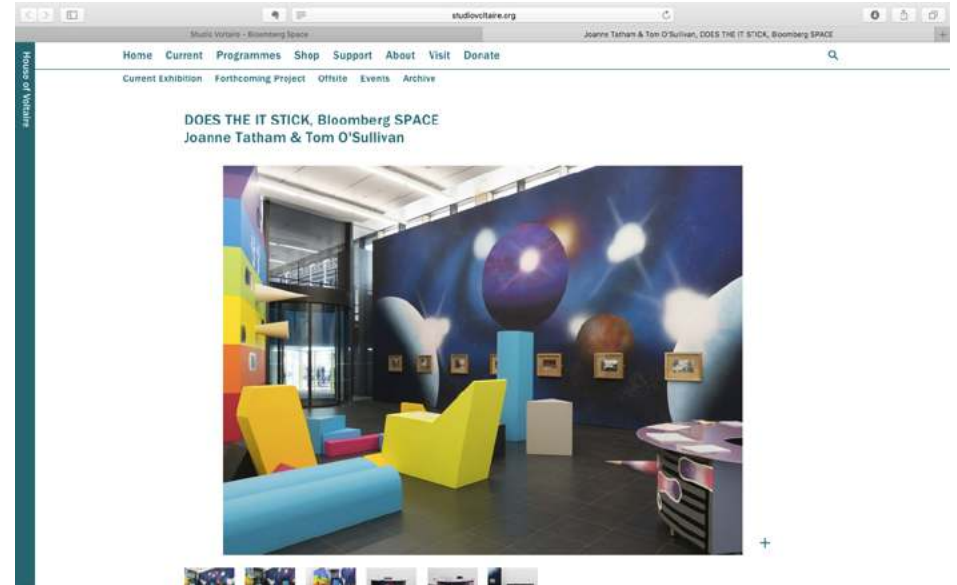
The project was further disseminated through the poster that was widely circulated by Bloomberg as part of the project. Subsequent dissemination exists through documentation on both the Studio Voltaire and Bloomberg websites.

Elements from the *DOES THE IT FIT/STICK* project were significant in the development of further artworks and projects, from 2017 to 2019:

- In 2017 A Commission for The Kings Cross Project *DOES THE ITERATIVE FIT* utilised certain strategies and devices from the original project, including the particular figurative motifs and use of spoken word as absurd/disruptive intervention.
<https://www.kingscross.co.uk/culture-arts/does-the-iterative-fit>
- In 2018 *DOES THE ITERATIVE FIT* was subsequently exhibited at Turner Contemporary, Margate.
- In 2019 *DOES THE ITERATIVE FIT* was further contextualised as *DOES THE ITERATIVE STICK*, a project for 'Rostockgata Sculpture Park', Kunsthall Oslo. This iteration also re-visited and expanded on the original text, together with aspects of the photo-works.
<http://kunsthall oslo.no/?p=6494&lang=en>
- In 2018 a commission for The Great Exhibition of the North, commissioned by BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, *A Successful Proposition for the Great North Exhibition*, also utilised and developed the model from *DOES THE IT FIT/STICK*. This included a development of the figurative devices, together with the production of an expansive spoken word text, both as satirical interventions into this context.
<https://baltic.art/whats-on/joanne-tatham-tom-osullivan>
- In 2018 a version of *A Successful Proposition for the Great North Exhibition* was exhibited as part of 'Chop Leisure' at IMT Gallery in London.



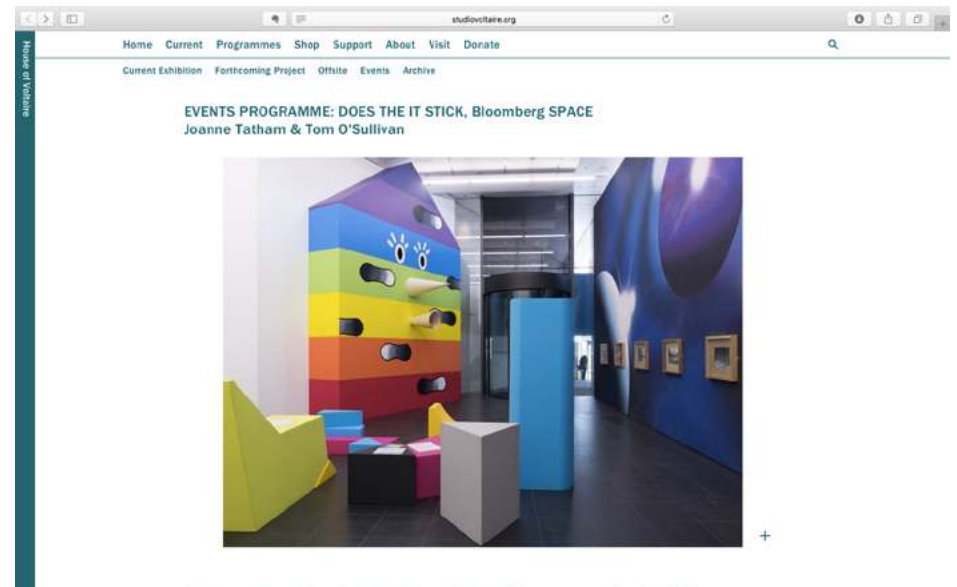
Above: Bloomberg website
 Right: Studio Voltaire website



Project on the Bloomberg SPACE website:
<https://www.londonmithraeum.com/bloomberg-space-archive/joanne-tatham-tom-osullivan/>

Project on the Studio Voltaire website:
<http://www.studiovoltaire.org/exhibitions/archive/joanne-tatham-tom-osullivan-2/>

<http://www.studiovoltaire.org/exhibitions/archive/joanne-tatham-tom-osullivan-does-the-it-stick-events-programme/>



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