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## ART + ACTIVISM [an exhibition]

from the Centre for Applied Human Rights

Centre for  
Applied  
Human  
Rights

CELEBRATING  
10 YEARS OF  
**HUMAN  
RIGHTS**

20 JANUARY – 5 FEBRUARY 2018  
Monday – Saturday 10am to 5pm  
King's Manor | York Explore | Pica Studios

# ART + ACTIVISM

## **An exhibition of the work and words of human rights defenders and artists**

Many of us are content to exist in the world as it is, but some people are inspired to change it or urgently need to. How does it actually feel to navigate the risks of fighting for justice, equality and liberty in today's world? And how can we imagine new ways of doing this?

Drawing from the research of the University of York's Centre for Applied Human Rights, this multi-media exhibition of work from international and UK based artists celebrates and acknowledges the work of the political risk takers, rebels and idealists amongst us.

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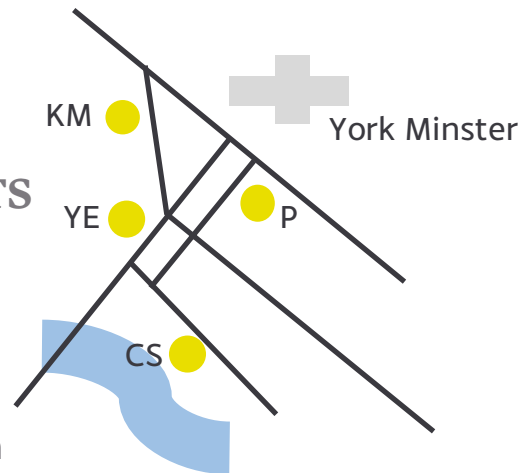
## A + A EVENTS:

### CENTRE FOR APPLIED HUMAN RIGHTS 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Event hosted by the Vice Chancellor of the University of York. Speakers are Michel Forst, Jestina Mukoko, followed by a drinks reception.

**WEDNESDAY 24 JANUARY 2018**

Bowland Auditorium, University of York, 6-8pm



### MUSIC OF ACTIVISM

Ladies of Midnight Blue and Kenyan revivalist Rapasa.

**THURSDAY 25 JANUARY 2018**

The Basement, City Screen, 5.30-8pm

### FILM SCREENING

Art, activism and the political imagination; films from Uganda and Bangladesh. Can doing and thinking like an artist expand the political imagination?

**FRIDAY 26 JANUARY 2018**

Pica Studios, Grape Lane, 6-8pm

### WORKSHOP FOR PEACE

Embroidery workshop with Mexican textile artist Rosa Borrás.

**SATURDAY 27 JANUARY 2018**

Pica Studios 10am-12pm

[york.ac.uk/cahr/news/events](http://york.ac.uk/cahr/news/events)



Supported by a grant from





# Imagination

*"It is, in fact, far easier to act under conditions of tyranny than it is to think."* The Human Condition (1958), Hannah Arendt

Sometimes activists are so caught up with the everyday, with tactics for resisting injustice, that they forget to talk about what they are campaigning for – what they want the world to look like. But without imagining different possible worlds, we are left with the dreams of the powerful. For the majority, they are experienced not as dreams but as nightmares of insecurity, precarity and powerlessness.

The art pieces on display in the Kings Manor Courtyard have been inspired by the Creative Alternatives research project, which is exploring how arts-based techniques can help disrupt our ways of knowing, make us sensitive to how we perform development and allow us to explore alternative models for resistance and alternative visions for the future.

*"Change starts in the mind. If you can imagine it, if you can really see it, then you can walk towards its fruition."* (Patience Nitemwesiga)





# Symbiotic Soundscapes

Lynette Queck, Rebecca Carr and Emilie Flower (UK 2017)

Interactive soundscape

Research is a generative process, and the raw data can be hard to understand. The noisescapes are a projection of data that was generated by research at the centre. They take as their inspiration the replacement of the head with a lotus flower, a repeating motif in the Bangladeshi creative alternatives research workshop in Dhaka. Much of the artwork in this exhibition is a response to this data – but what distinguishes it from the usual way that we encounter research is that it has been analysed and distilled by artists rather than social scientists, and presented through their lens.

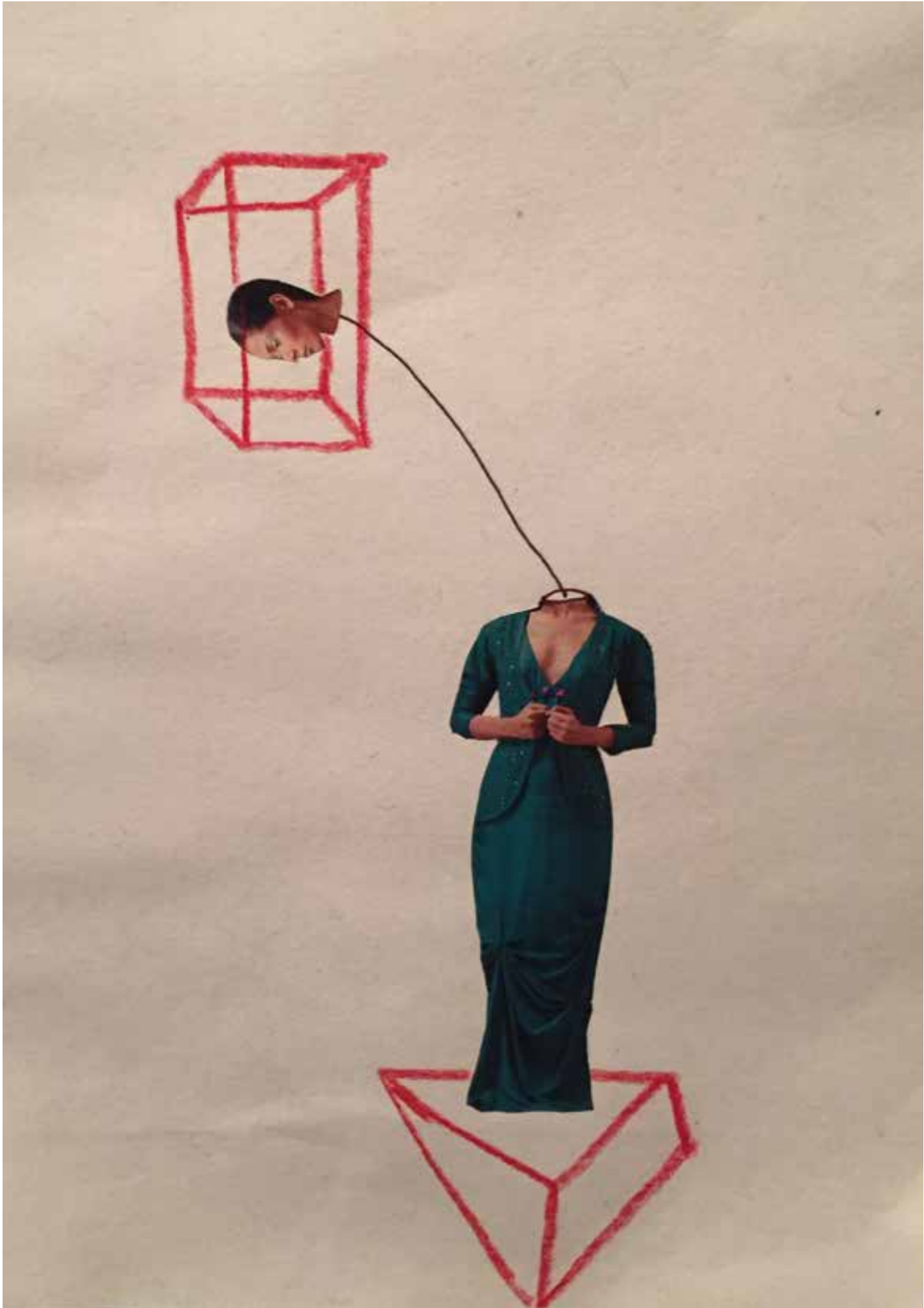
The soundscapes are an opportunity to appreciate the raw noise of unprocessed data.

1. Creative Alternatives workshop, Bangladesh, 2017
2. Creative Alternatives workshop, Uganda, 2017
3. Security of Defenders transcripts and poems, 2016

Image Overleaf:

Collage exhibited at the 22nd National Art Exhibition  
Shilpakala Gallery, Dhaka, 2017





# Postcards from the Future

Creative Alternatives Workshop, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2017

Ink

In 30 years the world could be a very different place. What would a perfect future look like? Try to imagine yourself in that perfect place? What can you see? What can you hear? What can you smell? Write a postcard to someone today, from that perfect utopian future, and post it on the tree in the inner courtyard of the Kings Manor.

Jaha,

IT ISNT HOW IT USED TO BE  
THE BLUE SO DEEP  
THE AIR SO FRESH  
THE LIFE.. HAPPY AND HEALTHY  
COME VISIT IF YOU CAN  
WE CAN GRAB A PINT  
you must come & see

a Bangladeshi  
So  
Pretty

- Istela  
a hundred years  
ahead....



Sasha

Druka

2017



# The Hidden

*"Now hacross Martin Boulevard;  
ladies and gentleman,  
below hus in this deep is yards and yards hot grief,  
plenty plots of soak-up dreams"*

Kei Miller, The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion

This installation has been inspired by the creative alternatives research from the University of York's Centre for Applied Human Rights. In contrast to celebrating the heroes of human rights, it draws attention to the collaborative and hidden worlds of the political risk takers, rebels and idealists amongst us.

There is a long tradition of activists using the arts to make political statements that would otherwise be forbidden, and the more arbitrary the political environment, the more those with less power will need to tap the rich and allusive hidden forms of communication and understanding that are our roots.

This installation is part of the Art and Activism exhibition showing the work and words of international human rights activists and artists at York Explore, The King's Manor and Pica Studios from the 20th January – 5th February 2018.

# The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion

Kei Miller

“How does one map a place  
that is not quite a place? How does one draw  
towards the heart?

...

How much  
have we not seen or felt or heard  
because there was no word  
for it – at least no word we knew?  
We speak to navigate ourselves  
away from dark corners and we become,  
each one of us, cartographers.”



## The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion

Kei Miller

“... should the day wring  
your heart out like the chamois  
towels of streetboys,  
then out of it would spring this  
stored portion  
of upfullness, and so anointed by  
your own storage,  
you would be able to face the  
road which is forever  
inclining hardward.

The cartographer...says  
every language  
even yours,  
is a partial map of this world”

# Uprooted

Lu Mason, 2018

Paper hanging

Making visible the things that your roots give you. Anchoring , history, culture and nourishment. If you have to leave your country you experience an uprooting and if you are uprooted you have to start that process again.

# Goin' Back To My Roots

Odyssey 1981

Lyrics

Zippin' up my boots  
Goin' back to my roots, yeah  
To the place of my birth  
Back down to earth

I'm standing in the rain  
Drenched and soaked with pain  
Tired of short time benefits  
And being exposed to the elements

I'm homeward bound  
Got my head turned around  
Ooh, ah

Zippin' up my boots

Goin' back to my roots, yeah  
To the place of my birth  
Back down to earth  
Ain't talkin' 'bout no roots in the land  
Talkin' 'bout the roots in the man

I feel my spirit's gettin' old  
It's time to recharge my soul  
I'm zippin' up my boots  
Goin' back to my roots, yeah

From art, literature, music and dance, I have learnt that there is a sensory experience of our lives that encompasses innumerable unnamed and unnameable shapes, hues and textures that 'objective knowledge' has failed to capture. The language of these genres communicates how ordinary people laugh and weep, work, play, pray, bless, love and curse, make a space to stand forth and walk, fall and die.

Philosopher and cultural critic Achille Mbembe, 2015

# Viewing Table

Lu Mason, 2018

Plant installation

Sometimes we forget to look closely at what lies beneath. We can be so easily bowled over by the show that we don't notice what is hidden from view.

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# Body Maps

## Creative Alternatives Workshop, Kampala, Uganda, 2017

Chalk on wall

These body maps were created by drawing stencils around each other. To guide the exercise, participants were asked to draw their roots in the legs, their emotions in the stomach, their skills in the arms and their dreams in the head.

## Creative Alternatives Workshop, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2017

Paint on paper

Inspired by the work of the Bangladeshi artist Estella Kazi's comic series on super heroes, workshop participants created hybridised heroic versions of themselves. Some people chose to leave their bodies empty, focusing attention on the heart, or the mind, others filled their profile with colour.

# Heroes of a Nation

Creative Alternatives Workshop, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2017

Ink on paper

A spontaneous visual chain of names and faces was drawn by the group to capture the conversation taking place about cultural heroes. In a visit to the national museum the next day, the same faces were on display in a hall of photographs, paying homage and spelling out the cultural heroes of the nation.



