

James Gatt: then and now

EXHIBITION SITE

Instagram | @kaldorpublicart_futurecurators

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

The Kaldor Public Art Projects archive is a dense library of historical documents mapping over five decades of collaborations with noteworthy artists and curators since 1969. Each collaboration varies, each resulting project differs, and each archive document can represent only a mere sliver of this history. Despite variation, each project shares a similar starting point — a conversation about an *idea*. Archive documents that provide insight into the genesis of projects are fascinating and significant for this reason. Where did each project start? How are their intentions communicated, adapted, incubated, realised? How might these original ideas be realised now?

then and now surveys archival content from nine Kaldor Public Art projects that document project ideas in their infancy, as preliminary correspondences and proposals. These archival documents, the earliest from 1969 and most recent from 2015, are, in a way, memories of unrealised notions. Locating and presenting them independently of the cumulative histories from which they emerge, offers the opportunity to revisit and reinterpret them as inchoate moulds — correspondences, concepts, imaginings, future orientations, speculations — and thus to consider them as both historical *and* contemporary possibilities.

World renowned curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, who has collaborated with Kaldor Public Art Projects twice, famously asks every artist he interviews about their unrealised projects. Considering that which is currently unrealised gives intent to possibility, an opportunity to express and shape ideas before they are developed and materialised. Crucially, ideas have potency in this intangible form, also. They can be shared widely and economically in the form of vernacular writing and conversation. As the documents in *then and now* attest, these idea vehicles acquire their own significance as lasting material artefacts within the archive. Still, there remains a distinction between ideas and their manifestations. Developing ideas into tangible encounters, structures or events requires resourcing, the social and political ramifications of which determine their feasibility and outcomes. The archival documents presented in *then and now*, therefore, also offer a framework for understanding these implications for Kaldor Public Art Projects historically.

then and now includes emails, letters, diagrams, instructions and drawings from nine Kaldor Public Art Projects that can be understood most basically as proposals, proposed anew within the exhibition as invitations, drafts and instructions for contemporary realisations of persisting ideas. Included in the exhibition are proposals by artists, curators and John Kaldor himself. Some remain unrealised, like those of Santiago Sierra and Xavier Le Roy, and some endure only in the fragile form of ideas or personal recounts, as is the case for the Tino Seghal project for which the artist insisted on a radically temporal event with as few material traces as possible. Those projects that were realised and more comprehensively documented are reverted in *then and now* to similarly preliminary sketches and vague artefacts, making it an exhibition not only of material, but, crucially and most importantly, one of ideas. To borrow from German painter Gerhard Richter, each idea is reinstated as a "form of hope."

Just as the present constantly grapples with the uncertainty of the future, ideas maintain the ability to be present precisely because of their potential for many possible outcomes. In addition to the insights they provide into how artists and curators were thinking, working, and predicting in the past, the historical documents in *then and now* proudly foreground their mutability. In this way, the exhibition transforms otherwise static memories into active possibilities, proposing that the true lasting monuments and legacies of cultural enterprise are the ideas that arise in their genesis, delivery, engagement, and recollection.