

FAILSTONE

Cultural Bridges blog

Changing the ongoing impression of space

As FAIL depart from their residency at Folkestone Fringe, there is a noticeable energy shift in the seaside town, in overheard conversations and in the frame work of what social space offers in Kent-does it have to be what it is and what voices are we still not hearing?

FAILSTONE in their second year of participation in Cultural Bridges programme, opened up Urban Room Folkestone for three weeks of take over by FAIL, the Leipzig collective who embody organic momentum and organised disarray. It was a welcome addition to the creative, calm and well established narrative Folkestone Fringe embody -trust, transparency and transformation.

Consuming the entire inner skin of once minimalistic, birch coloured double rooms with gold reflective sheeting, the German artists shone light into the diverse economic communities this evolving post industrial harbour attracts with spontaneous afternoons and evenings of artistic jamming. Gone were the books on history and planning, art and nature and the large, stylish, sculpted meeting table and benches banished offsite. Nothing was off limits as long as there was a sense of togetherness-“individual ideas but under the umbrella of a safe space for expression”.

Live music, Dj’s and spontaneous acoustic beat boxing, flashing coloured lights and smoke machines, games, craft and colourful graffiti posed questions inside and onto the black weatherboard that clads Folkstone’s Urban Room and it’s now golden heart.

Manu, Sacha, Renee and Jasmin, kind, intelligent and down right funny Deutschlanders, set about collecting vernacular histories, exploring grass roots community spaces, listening to what excites and frustrates the Folkestone and Hythe communities and encouraged residents to be involved in the process of social place making-or put simply and so well by the German collective “just come and play, hang out, be you”.

Sticky notes and drawings by the artists, ramblers, kids, young adults, tourists and vagabonds built a picture over the month of what was felt about human cultural interaction in this county, how people interact with their facilities and where mutual memories and passions are facilitated.

The German artists posed the question “What possibilities does an environment offer, how can we enable unheard voices, encourage diverse participation and using the process of honest experiences; what memories can we create that have lasting momentum and agency?

And this is what connects and emphatically embodies the cultural bridge between Folkestone Fringe and FAIL. A commitment to strengthen civic society, independent of historical, political motivations and interference in cultural dialogue, through redefining unrestricted engagement in public space.

Fringe have a committed, young and thoughtful team headed by Diane Dever who, with her international artistic experience encourages the team to be frank and open with their ideas, nature’s an appetite for autonomy and understands and initiates a consistent calendar of events empowering collective agency. The trust

and commitment FAILSTONE embodied by listening, evaluating and discussing what was happening during the exchange, their empathy towards nurturing a truthful and supportive artistic collaboration which emphasised the connectedness of German and British cultural democracy. It is the role of these bridges to explore and disrupt established spaces and this is FAILSTONE'S gift to our collective future. Urban Room Folkestone is changed by this partnership, its well earned integrity enabling a springboard for unconstrained events and its team constructing a dynamic dialogue of what a spontaneous future involves. It's what galvanises fluid history making.

By Lucy Edwards
A Folkestone Fringe Onlooker