

**“It’s the point
where all
lines meet”
How CVAN EM
sustains visual
art in the East
Midlands**

Case Study - Sustainability

Sustainability

CVAN EM's annual events provide opportunities for audiences to hear inspiring speakers, engage in stimulating conversations, discuss arts practice and network with peers. They feature high-profile speakers, who have previously included Emily Pethick, former director of The Showroom, and Ryan Hughes, founding curator of the Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art.

As CVAN EM is not attached to a particular venue, these events are peripatetic in nature; during the 2015-18 programme, we delivered events in Leicester, Lincoln and Northampton, allowing us to bring opportunities to different areas of the East Midlands, and help audiences discover new people and places. Where possible, we live

stream our events to make their content accessible to a wider audience.

Our annual events also offer artists and students the chance to promote their work and, in some cases, make new work for presentation. At the 2018 event, visitors viewed Northampton-based Dylan Fox's solo exhibition A Manipulation of Terms and new work by the University of Northampton's BA and MA students.

Another important aspect of these events is the learning opportunities they create for CVAN EM, as feedback from them informs the development of the organisation and our offer. For example, a specific request for an online "art map" of the region was taken on board and now features on the CVAN EM website.



**£400 investment
per project**

**19 initial
conversations**

**7 follow-up
conversations
and events**

3 events

144 attendees

**over 430 people
accessing
content remotely**

**19 exhibition
opportunities for
artists**

**33 presentation
opportunities for
speakers**

**41 artist
participants
audience of over**

490 people

Annual Events

CVAN EM's annual events provide opportunities for audiences to hear inspiring speakers, engage in stimulating conversations, discuss arts practice and network with peers. They feature high-profile speakers, who have previously included Emily Pethick, former director of The Showroom, and Ryan Hughes, founding curator of the Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art.

As CVAN EM is not attached to a particular venue, these events are peripatetic in nature; during the 2015-18 programme, we delivered events in Leicester, Lincoln and Northampton, allowing us to bring opportunities to different areas of the East Midlands, and help audiences discover new people

and places. Where possible, we live stream our events to make their content accessible to a wider audience.

Our annual events also offer artists and students the chance to promote their work and, in some cases, make new work for presentation. At the 2018 event, visitors viewed Northampton-based Dylan Fox's solo exhibition *A Manipulation of Terms* and new work by the University of Northampton's BA and MA students.

Another important aspect of these events is the learning opportunities they create for CVAN EM, as feedback from them informs the development of the organisation and our offer. For example, a specific request for an online "art map" of the region was taken on board and now features on the CVAN EM website.



“Thanks so much for yesterday ... a brilliant day all round.”

“It was a great way for me to meet more creatives in the area and hopefully will lead to some future collaborations.”

Annual event attendees

“We have started a conversation that will continue online and across the region and has the potential [to] define what contemporary arts looks like in our region and how it is received.”

“Many of the artists who attended felt this model of meeting people broke barriers ... and enabled them to talk to people who they otherwise would not reach.”

Start of Something participants

The Start of Something

The idea behind The Start of Something was simple: CVAN EM would provide a small amount of seed-funding for conversations that might lead to new collaborations.

This project highlights CVAN EM's ability to innovate and adapt our approach to best support artists and audiences in the East Midlands. By handing authorship over to participants, we were able to deliver a genuinely bottom-up project and create an opportunity for self-activating, sector-led activity.

Conversations and events took place across the region and included small-scale experimentation such as a speed-dating workshop for East Midlands-based artists in Leicester, as well as more ambitious undertakings, including the Derby Visual Arts Summit. In addition to

partnerships with a wide range of regional arts organisations, the project helped us develop relationships with academic institutions, including De Montfort University.

Several conversations had an immediate consequential effect, with follow-up events and working groups being organised, while others fed into wider civic or community projects. For example, Derby City Council has used feedback from the arts summit to inform its wider cultural strategy.

The project also created opportunities for students. CVAN EM's director delivered a workshop and small-group sessions to BA Fine Art students at De Montfort University, which led to the co-production of an evaluative process for the project and gave students the chance to liaise with practising artists and other arts professionals.



What the future holds

We have an ambitious agenda for the next few years. Building on the achievements of our 2015-18 programme, our future activities will support the sustainability of the East Midlands visual arts community by focusing on the development of an artistic career and exploring how a region can nurture its artists, from school to higher education, post-graduation, and throughout their careers.

We recognise that the whole visual arts sector has a part to play in enabling this development. As part of our forthcoming programme It takes a region to raise an artist, we will concentrate on partnership building, forging new relationships with arts organisations, cultural, educational and other institutions across the visual arts sector in order to investigate how collaborative working can contribute to increased community cohesion and artistic growth.

All we need now is the continued investment to expand our ambition and influence.

<http://cvaneastmidlands.co.uk/>
#ItTakesARegionTo



Contemporary Visual Arts Network East Midlands

Image credits

Another World is Possible, CVAN EM 2018
Annual Event

My Mother and Other Potato Peelers, 2018 part
of The Start of Something. Photography: Anna
Dixon

Derby Visual Arts Summit, 2018 part of The Start
of Something. Photograph courtesy Artcore

The Start of Something Northampton, 2019 part
of The Start of Something. Photography: Sophia
Kyprianou