

THE COLLECTIVE BLOG

CONNECTING WORLDS*

APRIL 12, 2015 | MARIE-LOUISE COLLARD | LEAVE A COMMENT



The Collective (minus two) after a recent meeting

There is often a sense that, however much you enjoy your job, what you do outside of working hours is quite separate from what happens within your working environment. This in turn helps to support that much sought after “work-life

balance” that so many of us aspire to achieve. As fulfilling as work can be, it can seem that the more removed that interest or passion is from your career the greater the chance that the apparent “balance” may be realised. So whether sports person, actor, singer, artist, writer, poet, tech wizard, what you do with your passion outside of work may improve your sense of well being at the same time. Perhaps this is true for many people? You spend so much time at work it is sometimes hard to imagine putting a lot of energy in to something quite different – though sometimes it is just what you need to remove yourself from the stresses that can occur in the day-to-day running of your life.

But what happens when external interests and work cross paths and the two worlds meet in an unusual combination – when you have the opportunity to connect both areas of your life? When, as blogger [John Stepper](#) would say, you bring your [whole self to work](#).

Although there are arts’ specialists in the [Collective](#), members are, for the most part, from very diverse non-arts professions ranging from local government to teaching, communications, IT, and the NHS. For two of us the influence of the Collective has contributed to producing some unusual projects at work. I have decided to separate the two experiences in to two blogs as they represent very different journeys and professional backgrounds. The first is my own story.

In 2011, just a few weeks in to my new role as a corporate communications manager at [UBM plc](#) I was unexpectedly drawn in to some discussions about refurbishments of the top floor of our office

building – a floor that was filled with meeting rooms, UBM’s board room and a long corridor that stretched the length of the building .Various ideas were discussed from themed areas that represented the different businesses, to fresh interior designers being brought in, to new photography to replace the old. As the floor often welcomed external visitors, what would best represent UBM?

For the most part I listened and observed – I was new after all.

In reality, I was already forming an idea, but I needed to work on it first. With over 8 years exposure to contemporary art, artists, galleries and studios through the Collective it would not have taken a genius to know what was going through my head. But my colleagues didn’t know that, and the challenge for me was “what” and “how”.



Michael Armitage's "men by the roadside" – one of the studies exhibited during the project and purchased by the Collective.

Over the next few days I discussed with [Collective](#) member [Tim Eastop](#) what he thought the chances were of [UBM](#), a commercial B2B events-led global organisation, collaborating with a local arts organisation? UBM had no previous history of supporting the arts (in their London office at least), but it did have a great track record of local community engagement often supported by their Charity Committee. I leveraged all the experience and contacts the Collective offered and within a couple of weeks came up with an idea for the proposed 9th floor refurbishment that could suit both sides of a collaboration.

A proposal was submitted and much to my amazement – approved. The result was a unique collaboration with [Drawing Room](#), a public non-profit contemporary arts organisation based in Southwark, the London borough where UBM’s head office is located. The idea was to promote and support emerging artists in a local but global business environment whilst also providing training for an emerging curator .



Mairia Evripidou, UBM Curatorial Intern for the last two exhibitions during an exhibition

After a meeting with Drawing Room Co-Directors [Kate MacFarlane](#) and [Mary Doyle](#) the project began to take shape. Under the leadership of Gallery Manager [Jacqui McIntosh](#) two sixth-month [exhibitions](#) would take place on the 9th floor, and with the help of a curatorial intern, funded by UBM through Drawing Room’s education programme, they would be responsible for researching local artists under agreed themes that

changeover weekend.

resonated with UBM. The second exhibition, "[Material Matters](#)" explored the ways artists referenced consumption and mass production and how they responded to recycled materials, tying in with UBM's own sustainability exploration and journey.

The funding from UBM's charity committee was initially for 1 year, but was subsequently extended for a further 2 years resulting in 5 exhibitions representing over 30 emerging artists from our own doorstep in Southwark. The final exhibition "[Full Circle](#)" drew artists from the previous exhibitions in the project and focussed on ideas of continuity and change – a concept critical to many business environments, not just that of UBM. As a community engagement project it also included a [networking event](#) for local artists and curators as well interested employees. The project finally ended this year when UBM's London office moved premises.

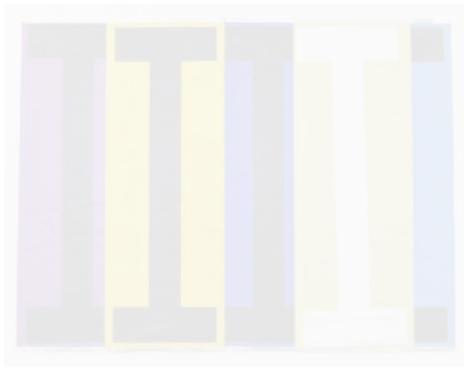
The project gave UBM employees at our London HQ an opportunity to see and think differently in their every day working lives. They were challenged, sometimes moved and occasionally mystified; they engaged with a very different professional community brought in to their own business environment; they welcomed the exhibition change every six months (no complacency about what was on the walls), and came to [lunchtime talks](#) offered by the artists in order to explore why and how the works of art they saw every day were created. . Thanks to our internal social intranet other UBM businesses outside of London and the UK were able to enjoy the works as I shared the project in a curated space for that purpose.

The relationship and collaboration with the Drawing Room team and many of the participating artists was inspirational. The three curatorial interns UBM sponsored have all gone on to good jobs in other arts establishments, and the artists who exhibited continue to move on to new adventures and shows. A full list of the exhibitions in the collaboration and the participating artists can be found on [Drawing Room's](#) website.



L-R: Amy-Rose Enskat (UBM Curatorial Intern), Jacqui McIntosh (Drawing Room Project Lead), Ben Deakin (participating artist and technician)

For me? Certainly one of the most memorable projects of my career, when two worlds came together in the most rewarding and fulfilling way I could have hoped for.



one of our site specific installations at UBM by artist Lizi Sánchez, IIIII, 2014 Acrylic on aluminium foil, 270 x 215 cm (5 panels of 78 x 115 cm overlapped)

* "[Connecting Worlds](#)", the fourth exhibition in the project, explored ideas of community across diverse cultures.

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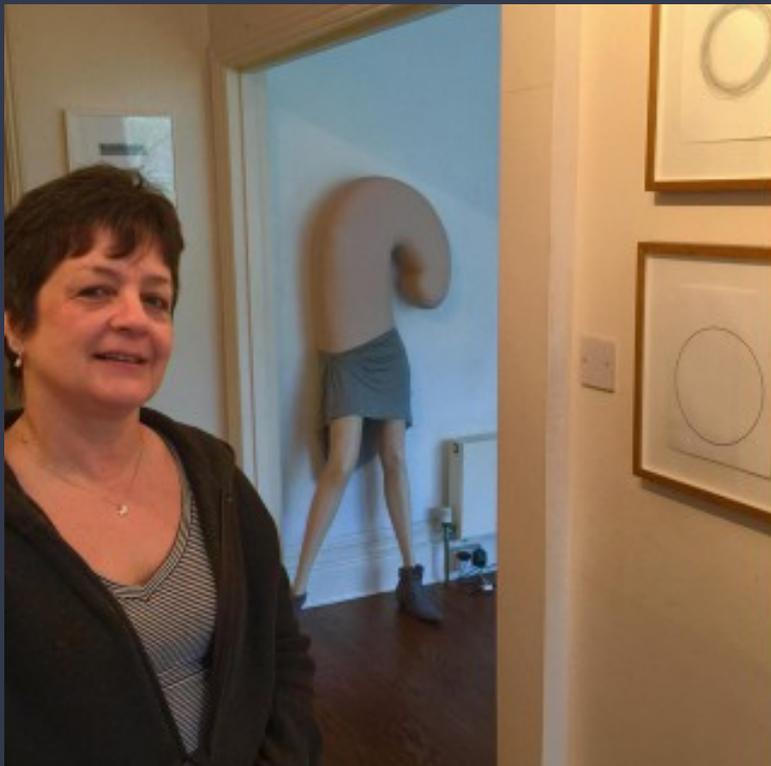
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ABOUT THE BLOGGER



Marie-Louise Collard

A corporate communications manager with a passion for contemporary art and a member of a Founding Collective that continues to buy, collect and share art in domestic surroundings. "It's a continuous learning curve both personally and professionally".

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