

RIASQuarterly

Autumn 2022 Issue 51

£12.50



Positive Tension

KIOSK



Kiosk explores the potential of a modest, unprogrammed community space for the testing of ideas at a small or experimental scale. It is a space within which enacting these potentials creates a continually evolving project that, in turn, develops in response to the activity it facilitates. It is open access – spatial possibility as public resource. Kiosk has been used as a venue for community organising and activism, as meeting space for small organisations, for playing board games, to repair furniture and restore bikes, for film screenings, workshops, experimental creative work, small performances, student exhibitions, retail pop-ups, art installations and parties.

We found an unused space with a polystyrene suspended ceiling, a leaking roof and no natural light, so our first moves were to strip out the interior, fix the roof and install a curious

round window. The addition of the window transformed the relationship of the building to the street, making it more evident than it had been for decades, but with an intentional and enjoyable ambiguity about its purpose. Internally, the new opening is framed as part of a multi-functional tiered window seat that occupies the full height of the space. This intervention is also suggestive rather than determinative; it can be sat on by one person or by several, used as a stage for performance, as a storage piece or as a plinth for display.

We have found that the act of building and making within the space, and that of changing its appearance, invites curiosity - more successfully than flyers, posters or social media. An 'A-board' asking a simple question, 'what should happen here?', is placed outside during any building work, inviting passers-by to interact. Making action visible,

Above

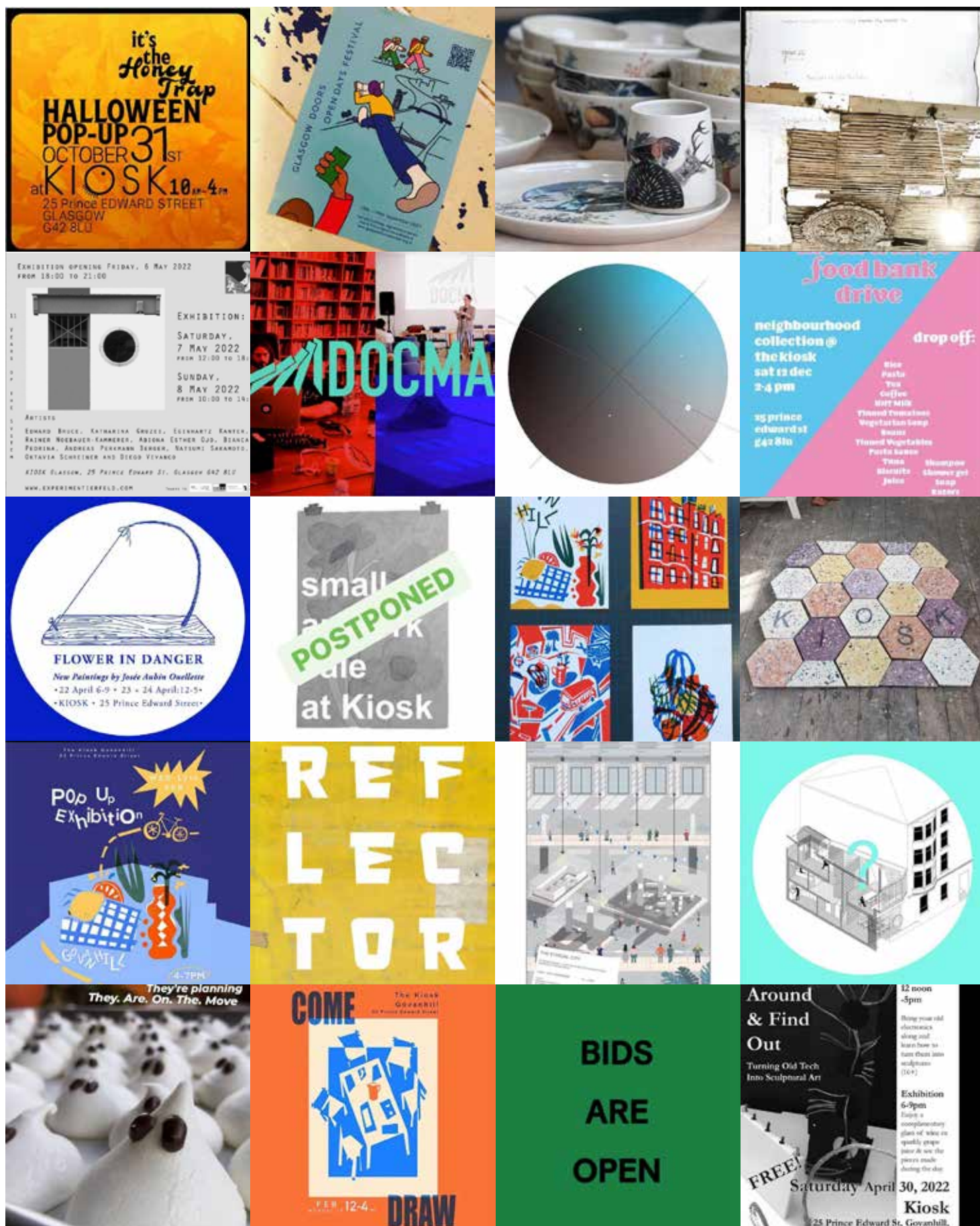
Construction in progress

© Duncan Blackmore

Opposite page

Collage of Instagram posts

© Kiosk





Above

Sound / vision show at
Kiosk

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audible and accessible creates intrigue, which becomes conversation, which becomes participation. It is in this way that most of us have met and become involved in the project.

We don't want the space to be perceived of, and used primarily, as an art space, as this has the potential to exclude other uses. In response to this concern, the design of the space is evolving away from the emptiness that suggests exhibition use towards something which communicates a more multifunctional potential. Making the interior from basic materials, and a low-skill set of principles, ensures that the space can be adapted by users quickly and at minimal cost.

We are constantly engaging with issues related to control, openness, accessibility, curatorship and management. Everybody involved in the running of Kiosk volunteers their time in order to sustain and progress the project. As a group we don't yet feel comfortable drawing conclusions about the project in terms of its success, its impact or its future.

We have, however, been surprised and inspired by the many different ways people have used, occupied and adapted the space, or have themselves been inspired by the space and the opportunity it affords.

The project has been extremely slow and exists in a constant state of fragility. Organisation and decision-making are non-hierarchical and happen through conversation between a changing group of residents and the initiators of the project. It was through this ongoing conversation that the project developed conceptually into a 'spare room' for Prince Edward Street - a place to test ideas, to host events, to do the thing that you can't do in your kitchen, your living room or your bedroom. It's a space in which you can engage with an audience beyond yourself and your own immediacy but not with any pressure or prohibitive expense - to a few people, not a few hundred. It's civic life at the small scale; invitation to participate, to test and to create.

Kiosk ■