

“EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS – HAPPENS SOMEWHERE”



# ❖ PRESENCE ❖





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*A divining tool for journeys through the restless territories and blurred boundaries of art in the social or public realm.*



PRESENCE is a set of cards intended to be used open up and explore a project or practice, to be an informal companion on creative journeys. The cards are navigational aids to help understand where we are and where we have been, as well as where we might be going. They can help articulate the aims, methods and values of a project or practice – from the interior, the exterior and the place where it sits.

PRESENCE is intended to offer a flexible resource that can be used with all participants, from initial creative meetings, to an evaluation process that might be ongoing or taking place at the end of a project.

The cards are a way of opening and sustaining conversations with ourselves and with others.

## PRESENCE



PRESENCE is:

- A set of enquiries that might help understand or construct a process
- A set of prompts to examine a process as it goes along
- An easily constructed space for deep reflection
- A shareable way of exploring a project or process
- A way of mapping / understanding practice
- A way of conducting research or evaluation

PRESENCE isn't:

- A creative tool kit to construct a project
- A methodology
- An analytical tool
- A description of practice

## PRESENCE

How to use the cards

- ◇ **Lay out the cards face down on a table** - Choose one that seems to fit the occasion or issue that has arisen.
- ◇ **Turn the card over** – answer the questions asked by the card as fully as possible. There are no wrong answers. Answers such as ‘yes’ or ‘no’ should be followed by ‘why?’ or ‘how?’ Document the discussion as necessary in order to reflect at a later date.
- ◇ **Choose another card.....if required.**

Some cards may not be relevant either to our project or practice (but may become so later), some may only be useful at certain times. The questions are intended to provoke discussion and exploration. They are signposts to useful places, rather than destinations in themselves.

N.B PRESENCE is an open source project: All questions, concepts and card designs can be challenged, refuted or replaced by your own versions.

❖ **CARD THEMES** ❖  
&  
Image Location Coordinates



**THE SPECTATOR**

Audience and participant  
51°47'58.75"N 4°57'59.24"W

**WHERENESS**

Distance and proximity  
55°51'27.24"N 4°15'33.41"W

**THE CAPTIVE STAR**

Orientation and direction of travel  
55°51'54.31"N 4°16'25.71"W

**THE ENGINEER**

Intention, tools and strategy  
55°12'18.54"N 4°1'26.81"W

**THE FOUNTAIN**

Aesthetics and process  
54°48'14.41"N 2°12'58.86"W

**ROGUE ELEMENTS**

The power of disruption Interruption  
52°5'1.76"N 4°39'40.49"W

**HERENESS**

Spatial, relational and temporal elements of place  
52°4'55.74"N 4°39'49.64"W

**THE ARCHIPELAGO**  
Alliances and friendships  
55°4'22.05"N 3°20'51.45"W

**THE PERMANENT MOMENT**  
Ethics and values  
54°48'41.30"N 2°14'56.50"W

**THE OFFERED HAND**  
Relationships  
54°48'41.57"N 2°14'58.86"W

**CONFEDERACY OF ONE**  
Authorship and co-creation  
54°48'41.56"N 2°14'58.63"W

**THE MIRRORED ROOM**  
Reflection and appraisal  
54°48'40.39"N 2°14'58.37"W

**THE SUNDIAL**  
Time and duration  
55°4'22.07"N 3°20'51.69"W

**THE GILDED CAGE**  
Project process and outcomes  
55°51'30.42"N 4°15'30.29"W

**THE PUBLIC ECHO**  
Public dialogue  
54°48'10.17"N 2°13'10.27"W

**THE MUSEUM**  
Social narrative and memory  
55°4'22.09"N 3°20'51.61"W

## PRESENCE

### Background



PRESENCE is a research led response to some of the questions that arose during the Art-Inbetween Summit held at The Stove Network, Dumfries during February 2016. The summit attempted to describe the distinctiveness of an evolving 'rural' contemporary arts practice across the UK

Our starting point was to try and understand this distinctiveness. What are the differences between rural arts projects and projects in urban settings with similar intentions or processes? After working with a number of artists, curators and producers using a word card process to explore core features of practice and context, our conclusion was that approach to practice was more important and distinctive than the location where it was situated.

During the research for this project it became clear that the language and meanings employed across practices that could be broadly described as socially engaged, participatory, situated or context led, was subtly different from project to project and from artist to artist.

PRESENCE attempts to sidestep these linguistic issues by creating a divining tool or navigational aid that enables the exploration process to be articulated in the language of all participants within the project. The role of the cards is to prompt, to disrupt habits, to revisit assumptions and reassess progress.

### Why a divining tool?

PRESENCE is an attempt to infuse the poetics of divination into the process of making creative work. The workings of the cards are intended to be mysterious. At points, questions that are opaque to some will be clear to others. For most, the answers will not be immediately available but must be looked for as the cards only point in useful directions. The cards are time and site-specific, the conversations that they provoke will illuminate the concerns and interests of those people in that place at that moment, however another reading on another day in another place may reveal different truths.

The points of interest in situated or social practice are not stationary and two dimensional, but three dimensional and moving, sometimes through time as well as space. PRESENCE creates a process that will result in a series of overlapping views from different positions - ideally revealing multiple pathways. This compound eye allows us to examine the same issues from different positions and so learn different things from each viewpoint.

There is no one overall model that covers arts projects that rely so heavily on the relationships between the participants and place. Each project and its becoming will be unique to that time, place and personnel, so the questions act as prompts for people to articulate their ideas, desires and needs freely and honestly and to be listened to in the same spirit.

### **The Challenge for Artists**

PRESENCE contains challenges for the artist or collective to examine their own role for themselves and their partners within a project. As practitioners ourselves we feel that it is important to make time for regularly examining our own understanding of what is going on and our role within it.

### **Collaborators and Community**

There are no specific cards for community or for participants, instead the interests and concerns of these parties are spread throughout the card set.

### **Not a Methodology**

The cards are not instructions or a model to build a project around. They have no opinions about the best way to conduct a project. The intention is to re-excite you and your collaborators about what you are doing and remind you that this is an adventure that you are sharing, and that the outcome is not fixed or scripted.

### **Aesthetics and Quality**

There are no clues in the cards about what is good, successful or beautiful, instead there are questions that might help reveal the internal logic and aspirations of the project. The understanding of these elements will maximize the chance of producing quality outcomes.

### **Evaluation and Reflection**

The PRESENCE Cards might have a role in the assessment or evaluation of a project. By finding a relevant and suitable way of recording the exploration provoked by the PRESENCE cards, a narrative version of a project could be produced and the information used later. A further important role for the cards is as an ongoing reflection of practice for the participants.

### **Open Source Future**

PRESENCE is an open source project: all questions, concepts and card designs can be challenged, refuted or replaced. Our version is a starting point from which new sets can be constructed specifically tailored to a project or practice.

PRESENCE is intended to be a resource and support for projects in the public realm; a way of exploring, mapping and evaluating an arts practice that is perhaps In-Between definitions.

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# PRESENCE



## Acknowledgments:

Thankyou to the following for their support with this project:  
The Stove Network, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Creative Scotland.

**PRESENCE** is a commission for The Stove Network: [www.thestove.org](http://www.thestove.org)