

Press Release 15 March 2023

## **Economics the Blockbuster: It's not Business as Usual**

30 June – 22 October 2023



*How can artists reimagine and disrupt conventional ideas of value, ownership, trade and economy?*

*How might artists inspire us to organise and practice our economic life more equitably, radically and sustainably?*

A provocative and inspiring exhibition on art as economic practice opens across the Whitworth as part of Manchester International Festival.

*Economics the Blockbuster* features a selection of extraordinary art projects that operate as real-world economic systems. Bringing together existing and new works, the exhibition draws on global strategies explored by artists and arts organisations including: **Asociación de Arte Útil, Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (CATPC) and Renzo Martens, Company Drinks, Goldin+Senneby, Kathrin Böhm and Kuba Szreder (Centre for Plausible Economies), Iumbung Kios, Owen Griffiths and Alessandra Saviotti, Rosalie Schweiker, The Alternative School of Economics and Tỳ Pawb.**

From a community-led drinks company to an art collective reclaiming plantation land, the exhibition and accompanying live programme includes artist commissions, art as business, merchandise with a purpose and workshops to reimagine and take back the economy. Responding directly to the failures and limits of current systems, the exhibition proposes new ways of 'doing business' and living together better.

Economy includes many things. From the exchange of gifts and caring for others, to building trust and sustaining the environment. It happens not only in factories, offices or shops but in meadows, picket lines and museums. Building on the Whitworth's on-going commitment to being a useful museum driven by a civic purpose, the project addresses economics as a social, as well as financial, set of relations that we all take part in.

The exhibition was initiated by Alistair Hudson (former Director at the Whitworth, now Artistic- Scientific Chairman of Zentrums für Kunst und Medien (ZKM), Germany) and is shaped by a collaborative group led

# the Whitworth

by Poppy Bowers, Interim Head of Exhibitions at the Whitworth, and including: John Byrne (Liverpool John Moores University), Kathrin Böhm and Kuba Szreder (Centre for Plausible Economies), Ismail Ertürk (Alliance Manchester Business School, The University of Manchester), Alessandra Saviotti (Asociación de Arte Útil), Vicky Carr and Chris Shearston (Textbook Studio), Holly Shuttleworth (Executive Producer, HS Studio), Whitworth staff Ed Watts, Head of Civic Education and Engagement and Hannah Volland, Curatorial Assistant.

Poppy Bowers, Curator and Interim Head of Exhibitions at the Whitworth, said: "At the Whitworth we believe art can be actively involved in shaping a fairer society. Economy affects us all every day, and this timely exhibition features artists who don't just critique economy but are working to redefine it. They each set up working economic models in their localities, driven by the needs and concerns of the communities in which they are created. We are so excited to platform these projects, share and activate them with the city of Manchester and beyond."

Kuba Szreder and Kathrin Böhm at the Centre for Plausible Economies said: "Just as our economic systems rely not only on money, but also on care, gifts, and environment, art is not just about paintings, but also about values, communities and resources. Museums and artists alike, instead of being hapless victims of economic forces, can and often play an active role in creating and sustaining more equitable economies."

**For further press information, images and interview requests please contact Catharine Braithwaite on 07947 644110 or [cat@we-r-lethal.com](mailto:cat@we-r-lethal.com)**

## Notes to editors

A project by the Whitworth, The University of Manchester and presented as part of Manchester International Festival.

Image Credit: Members and regular pickers of Company Drinks, a community-driven drinks business, forage for hawthorn at Eastbrookend Country Park in Dagenham, East London/Essex.  
Photo courtesy of Company Drinks

## About the Whitworth

The Whitworth is proudly part of The University of Manchester, operating as a convening space between the University and the people of the city. It was founded in 1889 as The Whitworth Institute and Park in memory of the industrialist Sir Joseph Whitworth for "the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester" and continues this mission today in new contexts. In 2015 the gallery undertook a £17 million redevelopment by architects MUMA, which doubled the public space, creating new facilities to house the collection of over 55,000 works of art, textiles, and wallpaper. Along with expanded gallery spaces, a study centre, learning studio, and collections care centre, the gallery reconnected with its park, with communal gardens and outdoor programmes. The gallery is driven by a mission to work with communities to use art for positive social change, and actively address what matters most in people's lives. This new vision has been developed as part of an international dialogue about how to evolve and adapt museums to a constantly changing world. This work is underpinned by three key concepts: learning together, through making and doing; creating a place of care, consideration, and community; taking action. [www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth)

Gallery opening times: Tuesday to Sunday 10am-5pm, Thursday late opening until 9pm  
With thanks for our official paint sponsor Little Greene.