

Abdullah Elias

Selected Work 2025

ដំបូងឯក ការចាយទិន្នន័យ

“If you don’t have water, make chili sauce with dish-water”



Abdullah Elias(1985) is an artist, designer, and community strategist whose work is shaped by long term engagement, active listening, and collaboration. His practice is grounded in the belief that meaningful infrastructure emerges through relationships rather than top down solutions, and that communities must have an active role in shaping the spaces, systems, and institutions that affect their daily lives.

For over twenty years, Elias has worked across food systems, public space, and the built environment in Philadelphia, Bangkok, London, and New York City. His approach privileges time spent on the ground, listening and learning within the everyday institutions of neighbourhood life, including barber shops, bodegas and corner stores, courtyards, street corners, and faith based spaces. These environments shape both the vision and direction of his work, ensuring projects respond to lived realities rather than abstract assumptions.

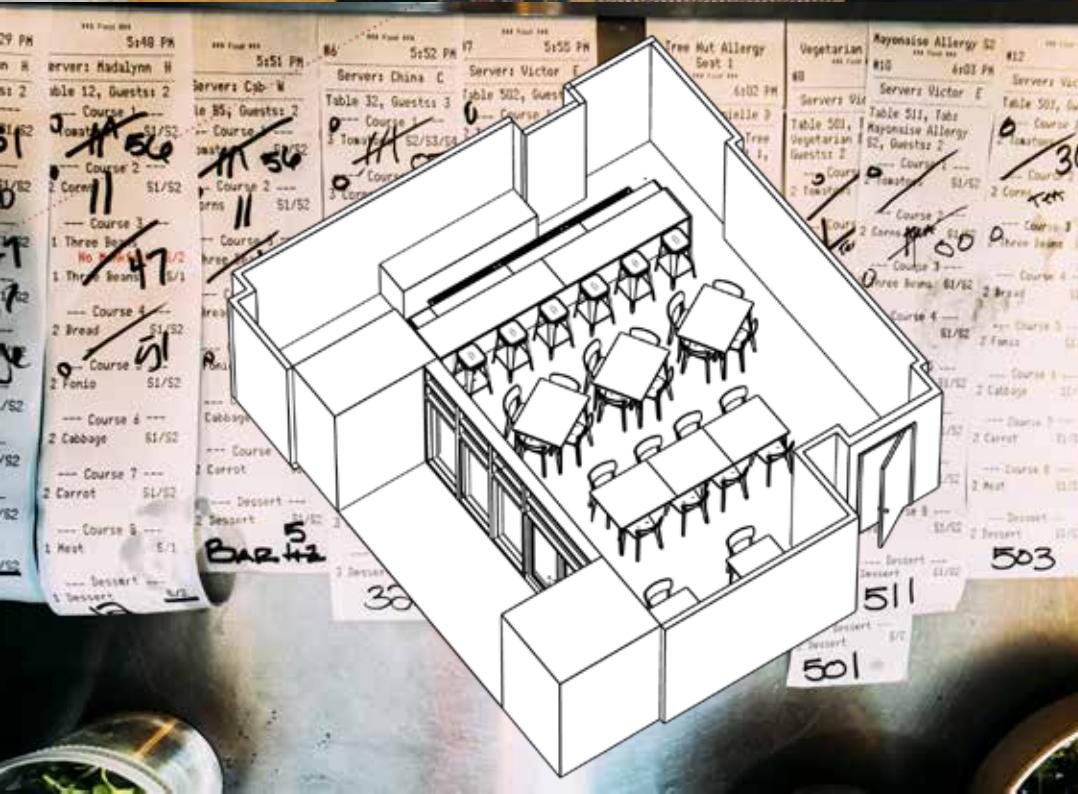
Alongside his community based practice, Elias works within the built environment as a designer and project lead, supporting design build projects, managing capital works, and advising on fabrication, sourcing, and material strategies. He often challenges conventional briefs, recognising that not every problem can or should be solved through a building, programme, or master plan. Instead, his work begins by understanding what communities already know they need, and determining how design and resources can best support those priorities.

Elias frequently acts as a bridge between local residents and formal entities such as cities, developers, and institutions. Through participatory processes, he helps translate community knowledge into responsive work that speaks directly to local needs and includes residents in the literal building of spaces, systems, and programming. His work is guided by a commitment to equity, stewardship, and the belief that sustainable change grows from collective effort rather than individual authorship.

Elias has worked with organisations and institutions including the Greater London Authority, Tate Britain, Tate Modern, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Design Museum, the London Design Festival, United Way, Cooper Union, Parsons School of Design at The New School, Columbia GSAPP, Harvard Kennedy School, the Municipal Art Society of New York, Henry Street Settlement, Lower Eastside Girls Club, and a wide range of community based organisations in New York City, London, Philadelphia, and Bangkok.



COMMUNITY KITCHEN



Community Kitchen Pilot

New York, NY (2025)

Client: Community Kitchen Inc

Community Kitchen is a pilot restaurant and community food initiative founded by food writer and advocate Mark Bittman, developed to test new models of access, equity, and care within the urban food system. Conceived as a response to structural inequities in the restaurant industry, the project positions food as a public good, offering high-quality, plant-forward meals through a sliding-scale pricing model that invites diners to pay what they can.

Working closely with Bittman and the founding team, Abdullah Elias led the design, build-out, and operational development of the pilot restaurant, translating the project's values into a fully realised spatial and organisational model. This work included site surveys, floor plans, renderings, and detailed millwork drawings, alongside the co-design and fabrication of all furniture and interior elements. Upcycled materials were prioritised, with upholstered seating and fixtures produced in collaboration with local artisans and residents on East 7th Street, embedding the project within its immediate neighbourhood.

Elias oversaw the full renovation and launch of the space, coordinating licenses, permits, and inspections across New York City agencies, while leading strategic planning that included competitor analysis, financial modelling, feasibility studies, and operational pathway development. Branding and outreach formed a core part of the work, with Elias developing the project's visual identity, signage, menus, and campaign materials, and leading a trilingual outreach strategy in English, Mandarin, and Spanish to connect the restaurant with its diverse community.

With community engagement at its core, the project was developed through participatory design, listening sessions, and research in collaboration with the Lower East Side Girls Club and neighbourhood stakeholders. Elias also supported local and regional procurement strategies and co-designed evaluation tools and values-based impact metrics with the internal team and community partners, establishing methods to assess access, participation, and long-term impact. At its heart, Community Kitchen demonstrates how hospitality can function as civic infrastructure—built collaboratively, locally rooted, and shaped by the people it serves.





Brooklyn Food Guild

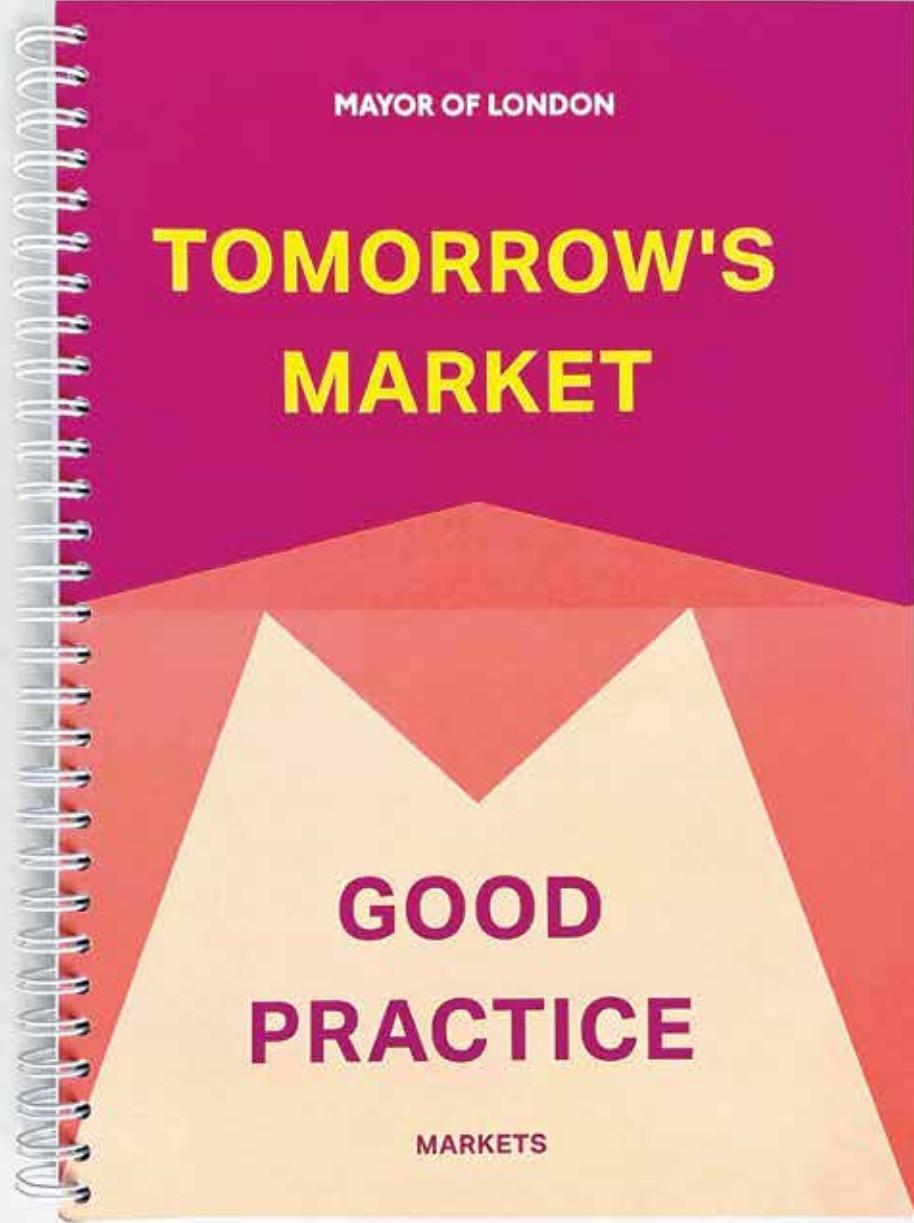
New York, NY (2022-Present)

with Brooklyn Communities Collaborative, Mangrove FC, Restoration

Brooklyn Food Guild is an active cooperative network of small and micro food businesses formed to address structural barriers to market access, capital, and institutional contracting within New York City's food economy. Conceived at Mangrove FC in 2022, the Guild was developed as shared infrastructure rather than a traditional intermediary, enabling independent caterers and producers to collectively pursue opportunities that would be inaccessible individually. The Guild is currently in its pilot year of operation (2025).

The Brooklyn Food Guild is co-led by Abdullah Elias in partnership with Androniki Lagos, focusing on the development of the cooperative model, operational framework, and public-facing strategy. Working closely with member businesses, growers, and institutional partners, the work translates cooperative values into practical systems—structuring the Guild as a container through which contracts, procurement, financing, and professional services flow, allowing members to pool capacity, share risk, and collectively fulfill institutional food contracts.

The project centres on the design of governance structures, workflows, and operational pathways that support collaboration across diverse businesses. This includes collective procurement and sourcing with regional farmers, coordination of logistics and regulatory compliance, and the integration of shared services such as insurance, sales brokerage, administration, and marketing. Through partnerships with anchor institutions and community organisations, the Brooklyn Food Guild operates as both an economic platform and a form of community-owned infrastructure—demonstrating how collective organisation can strengthen local food economies and expand access to opportunity within urban systems.

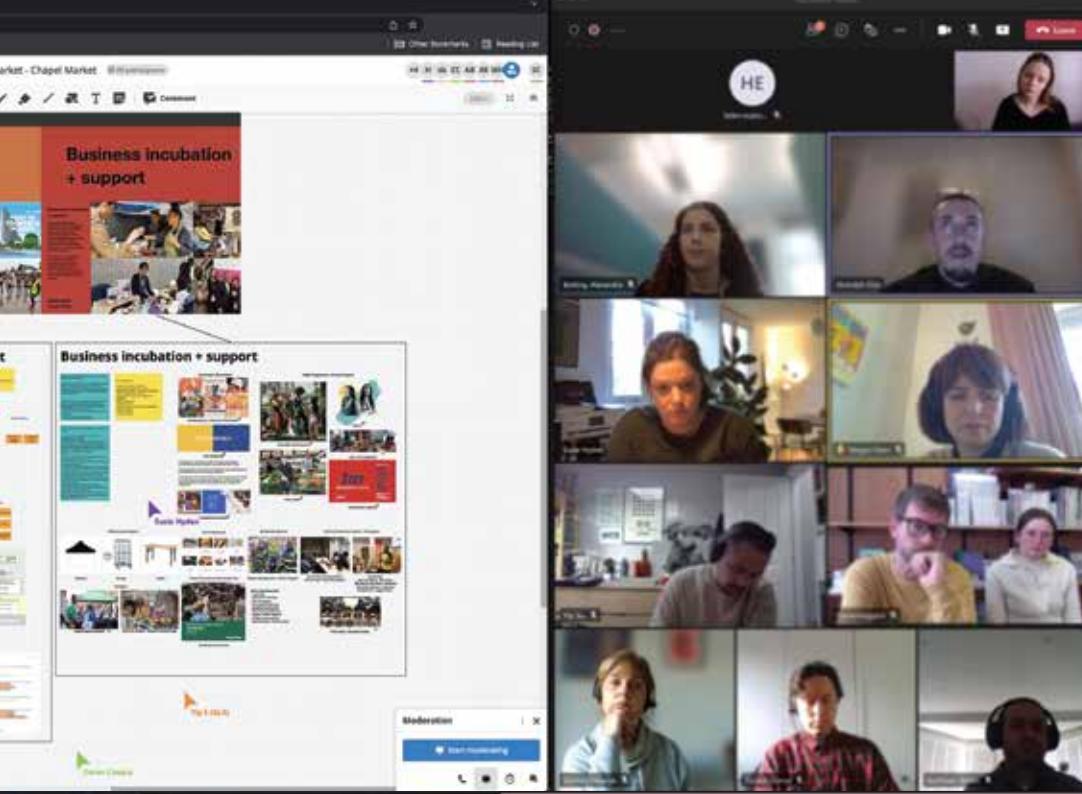


MAYOR OF LONDON

TOMORROW'S MARKET

GOOD PRACTICE

MARKETS



BUSINESS ENTERPRISE AND SUPPORT

Markets are London's original business incubators, providing low threshold access to traders to start-up, develop and grow their business.

A market's growth is dependent on a successful collaboration between its operator, its traders, its customers and its impact on the surrounding community. All the components considered so far – from marketing and physical space to operations and investment in market management – will encourage customers to shop locally. They will also help to ensure that your market offers commercially viable trading opportunities for a diverse range of traders and trades.

Attracting and retaining traders is a critical consideration for all markets. Giving traders the tools, knowledge and environment within which to grow their enterprise will incentivise them to expand and stay loyal to your market. It will generate market income and create more opportunities for residents and traders. This in turn will support the wider local inclusive economy and the success of your high street and town centre.

What to consider:

- Trader facilities
- Enterprise Incubation
- Supporting business growth

Tomorrow's Market 2.0 Good Practice Market Guide

London, UK (2020-2025)

Client: Greater London Authority

Tomorrow's Market 2.0 is a citywide regeneration and research initiative developed to support the long-term resilience of London's street and public markets. Commissioned by the Greater London Authority and delivered between 2020 and 2023, the project emerged directly from the Tomorrow's Market pilot trader programme, first developed in 2018 by Abdullah Elias in partnership with **Hazel Durrant** and **Tina Jadav**. That pilot supported 30 traders across London and revealed critical barriers to entry for new traders, alongside the operational and regulatory challenges faced by public markets.

Abdullah Elias served as Project Lead and Co-Author for Tomorrow's Market 2.0, co-leading the work in partnership with Gort Scott. Building on the pilot programme's findings, the project combined strategic research, policy development, and sector engagement to produce Tomorrow's Market: A Good Practice Guide—a practical, how-to resource for local councils, market operators, and policymakers. The guide addressed themes including market identity, governance, logistics, trader support, and circular economy practices, translating lived experience into actionable guidance.

Additional funding was secured from Google to support a parallel research strand led by Elias, involving the photographic documentation of 12 markets across London. This work included shadowing traders and capturing the day-to-day realities of market life, labour, and informal economies, grounding the policy and design recommendations in first-hand observation. Alongside the publication, Elias led a seminar and knowledge-sharing programme to strengthen cross-borough collaboration across London's public market sector, positioning markets as vital civic infrastructure and advocating for more equitable, sustainable delivery models.







PASA(People's Institute For The Advancement Of Science And Art)

New York, NY (2024-Present)

Collaborators: al-ae, The Cooper Union, LESGC, Henry Street Settlement

PASA (People's Institute For The Advancement Of Science And Art) is a civically engaged research and creative practice initiative that explores how cultural and civic institutions might be reimagined through community knowledge and collaborative inquiry. Begun at **The Cooper Union** in 1897 and revived in 2024 as a partnership between The Cooper Union and Henry Street Settlement, PASA serves as a platform for participatory research, public programmes, and sustained engagement across disciplines and communities in New York City.

Elias, in partnership with **Androniki Lagos** through their participatory design and planning studio al ae, has been supporting the development of PASA through community engagement, partnership building, fundraising, and the co design of community led programmes. Working closely with **Henry Street Settlement**, **Abrons Arts Center**, and local residents, the work brings institutional partners and neighbourhood participants into shared processes of inquiry and creation that challenge conventional definitions of expertise and institutional authority. This effort is supported in part by the Enduring Culture Grant from the Municipal Art Society of New York.

The project centres on developing participatory frameworks and community rooted programmes that activate PASA's mission in culturally generative ways, including workshops, salons, and events co designed with partners such as the **Lower EastSide Girls Club** and local community members. Through these engagements, PASA foregrounds community knowledge as a form of infrastructure rather than an ancillary input, enabling residents and cultural workers to shape agendas, define priorities, and contribute to institutional practice on equal footing.

By embedding long term engagement, trust building, and shared stewardship at the core of its work, PASA seeks to break down barriers between formal institutions and the communities they serve. The initiative operates as both a platform for civic research and a provocation, demonstrating how cultural and educational institutions can function more openly, responsively, and collectively by positioning lived experience and communal knowledge alongside academic and organisational expertise.

FLATBUSH CEE

Caribbean Marketplace

Natural
Caribbean

Jackfruit

per person
per institution (cleaned)

Natural
Caribbean

Sugar Cane





Flatbush Central Caribbean Marketplace

New York, NY (2020-2025)

With: Urbane Development + BRP

Flatbush Central Market is a community anchored public market and small business incubation hub in Central Brooklyn, developed to support immigrant and BIPOC entrepreneurs through access to affordable space, shared infrastructure, and coordinated business support. The market operates as both a neighbourhood gathering place and an economic development platform, prioritising local ownership, cultural continuity, and long term sustainability within a rapidly changing commercial corridor.

Elias supported the development and operation of Flatbush Central Market through spatial design, programme development, and strategic planning. This included supporting the renaming and branding of the market, project managing the site build out, and working directly with vendors to design and deliver individual build outs that reflected their operational needs and working practices. In parallel, Elias led transition planning efforts and worked closely with legacy vendors to co design operational structures that would support continuity, growth, and long term stability.

A core component of the work involved developing operational and financial models that prioritised equity and accessibility. This included designing pricing structures that accounted for the realities of early stage and locally owned businesses, balancing affordability with sustainability, and ensuring that shared infrastructure functioned as a support rather than a barrier.

Grounded in sustained collaboration with vendors and neighbourhood stakeholders, the project positions Flatbush Central Market as a form of community owned infrastructure rather than a conventional retail development. By embedding design, operations, and equity into everyday practice, the market demonstrates how public markets can function as resilient social and economic infrastructure rooted in the lived realities of the communities they serve.







Mangrove FC

New York, NY (2020-2025)

With: Urbane Development x Mangrove Community Wealth Inc.

Mangrove FC is a community anchored food business incubation hub and shared kitchen in Central Brooklyn, developed to support immigrant and BIPOC entrepreneurs through access to affordable workspace, coordinated business support, and culturally grounded public programming. Operating within Flatbush Central, Mangrove FC functions as both an economic development platform and a neighbourhood resource, responding to long standing inequities within New York City's food economy.

Elias served as Founding Director of Mangrove FC, leading the design, launch, and operation of the initiative from inception. Elias designed and launched the full programme ecosystem, aligning learning, production, and growth pathways across the Shared Kitchen Membership Programme, Food Hall Incubation, Community Business Academy, Food for Thought dinner series, Vendor Cooking Sessions, School Brunch and Dinner Showcase with Erasmus AOHT, CHOW Institute workforce training, Youth Design Center programmes, Design Lab Civic Residency, Mangrove x Parsons Exchange Fellowship, Green Industrial Design Jam, and the early development of the Food Guild.

Central to the work was the development of operational and financial models that prioritised accessibility and long term sustainability. This included establishing subsidised and equitable pricing structures for Flatbush and NYCHA residents, supporting regulatory navigation and compliance, and building partnerships with educational institutions, workforce organisations, growers, chefs, and community based organisations to strengthen pathways for business development and cultural production.

Grounded in sustained engagement with entrepreneurs, vendors, and neighbourhood stakeholders, Mangrove FC operates as a form of community owned infrastructure rather than a conventional incubator. The full scope, outcomes, and lessons from this work are documented in Mangrove FC's Year 1 and Year 2 Impact Reports.

Learn more: <https://flatbushcentral.com/>







Food For Thought

New York, NY (2020-2025)

Collaborators: Prince Abou, Anya Peters, Melissa Vigilance, Chris Paul,

Food for Thought is a curated dinner and learning series developed to explore food as a site of culture, memory, and political ecology. Conceived as a platform for shared meals and critical conversation, the series creates space for participants to engage with questions of sourcing, sustainability, labour, and cultural preservation through embodied, communal experience.

Developed and led by Elias as part of Mangrove FC's public programming, Food for Thought brings together chefs, growers, and cultural practitioners to share knowledge through cooking, storytelling, and collective dining. All food served through the series is sourced from local BIPOC led farms, grounding each event in equitable regional supply chains and food sovereignty.

The series has included partnerships with Chef **Anya Peters of Kit n Kin** and ceramicist **Kemi Schlesinger**, who developed custom tableware in direct response to the dishes and menus created for each gathering. Programming has also featured Prince Abou's full animal butchery demonstrations, paired with six course tasting menus developed using only offal, inviting participants to engage critically with questions of waste, value, and whole animal utilisation through both practice and taste.

Grounded in hospitality as a form of civic practice, Food for Thought positions the shared table as a site of learning and collective reflection. By centring cultural knowledge, ethical sourcing, and collaborative making across disciplines, the series demonstrates how food based programming can operate as social infrastructure, strengthening community ties while opening dialogue around the systems that shape what and how we eat.





A Common Ground

Tate Britain, London (2018)

with Something & Son

A Common Ground, a temporary garden installation designed and fabricated collaboratively with Something & Son, was designed to unpack, de-construct and propose modes for reconstituting British cultural identity through seemingly innocuous activities. With activities involving food, a safe space was created for socialising, sharing and finding common ground, for participants to begin having comfortable discussions about potentially uncomfortable topics. Elias and team operated on the fundamental belief that a great meal can change the way a person sees the world and, in turn, how they perceive institutions like the Tate and the roles they play in the construction of British art history, culture and everyday life.

By introducing diverse culinary traditions that are deeply embedded in Britain's social fabric, the project hoped to decolonize British culture in a heartfelt and meaningful way. Locals were engaged in community dinners, cooking workshops and storytelling through food. Most notably, ethnobotanical way-finding tools were distributed throughout the garden, detailing how vegetables and spices ended up in parts of the world due to the establishment of trade routes and colonization. Weekly events that explored different cuisines were also organized, comprising activities like Korean kimchi making, herbal medicine preparation and Caribbean Ital cooking demos. Working in conjunction with the Ramadan Tent Project, the first ever Iftar dinner was held at the Tate. Over five hundred guests participated in this shared meal and a series of talks in the gallery's courtyard.

With outreach as its priority, thousands of Londoners who had never been to the Tate before were invited to participate in this holistic programme. At its heart a project for the people and by the people, *A Common Ground* was developed from close collaborations with local residents, the Tate's service staff, including those in catering, cleaning and security, and two local Mosques throughout the summer of 2018.





Boulevard 3.0 Live Archive

Tate Britain, London (2018)

Collaborator: Abbas Zahedi

"The Boulevard is a series of interactive installations consisting of a green-screen, upon which locally sourced food is served within the context of a public exhibition space."

-Abbas Zahedi

During a five-month-long public programme curation project at the Tate Britain, Elias worked closely with staff across every sector of the museum and discovered stark imbalances within the institution's social structure.

As a response towards this social imbalance, Elias and Zahedi conceived of an interactive installation, wherein members of the public were invited to partake in a shared meal. Encouraging visitors to engage in meaningful exchange with the service staff. Served in the 1840's gallery in the main exhibition hall, the anachronistic disjunct between the contemporary form of installation and the antiquated space hinted at the archaic nature of the Tate's customs and hierarchies.

The soup was also imbued with its own critical poeticism, made with nettles foraged from the Tate Britain employee garden—the only thriving plant in the garden. Nettles have invaluable healing and immunity-boosting properties, thrive in the harshest environments and are often overlooked or avoided, and were thus identified as an apt metaphor for the disparity in treatment between the security and service staff members of the Tate Galleries.

"We're transforming the 1840's gallery into a living space to meet, eat and connect. Hosted by artists Abbas Zahedi and Abdullah Elias, this space invites you to pull up a cushion, enjoy soup made with ingredients from the garden and engage in conversation and exchange with your neighbour."

-Tate Britain Event Copy





A Seat at the Table

Tate Britain, London (2018)

Collaborators:

Abbas Zahedi

Al Hayyat Halal Meats

A Seat at the Table was a performance in the form of a meal which attempted engage neighbouring residence of the Tate Britain and strip down socioeconomic barriers between long-term residents of the Church Hill Garden Housing Estate and the River Walk Apartments, newly built residences in Pimlico, London.

An equal number of invitations were sent out randomly to both residences requesting their participation in a group meal. To encourage non-hierarchical interactions, guests were situated at tables next to people whom they had never met before, and urged to talk to one another.

Given a seat at the table, guests immersed themselves in a good meal and good company and, in this universal act of enjoyment. At the same time, they were made aware of social discrepancies, which were clearly visible and keenly felt in new and unfamiliar interactions.

All the ingredients were sourced from local shops and vegetables grown in the garden installation *A Common Ground*, as a gesture of support for local businesses, communities and practices that were embedded in Pimlico. Crucially, each dish told a story: some were of the collaborators' personal journeys through the service industry; others were of their social struggles and experiences with migration; and all of them spoke of cultural heritage and familial ties.





Equal Parts: Eid Al-Adha Celebration

Tate Britain, London (2018)

Collaborators:

Hassan Vawda

Abdul Maalik Tailor

The project's title *Equal Parts* refers to the ritual sacrifices made during Eid Al-Adha, or "The Festival of Sacrifice", where animals are split into three portions to be shared amongst those most in need; as well as the notion that Muslims should be entitled to the same forms of participation within the Tate Britain. The Muslim community can be involved as key stakeholders of the gallery space, not simply as security or cleaning staff, but as patrons and artists; and not simply as onlookers of a prescribed history, but as active contributors who can ascribe meaning to the space and the works within it.

Equal Parts ambitiously reinvented the institution's spaces and public programmes. People from across London came together to break bread in a communal potluck with Ethiopian food and coffee from the Al Negashi Centre, dishes from the Tate staff and sweets from the Ramadan Tent Project. Tate's greenhouse was transformed into an Islamic children's bookstore, and the Djanogly lawn became a prayer space, featuring talks with Imams and activities for children where they could design a "*London Prayer Mat*". There were also Islamic tours of the Tate led by blue badge tour guide Abdul Maalik Tailor.

A pioneering social project, *Equal Parts* was Tate Britain's first ever Eid event since its opening in 1897 and marked several of the institution's other "firsts", from the first Eid celebration at the Tate, which called for its first collaboration with local mosques Al Negashi Centre and Victoria Islamic Cultural Centre; to the first Islamic tour of the gallery, which critically examined the Tate's acquisitions and interpretations of their collection. This was also the first time a call to prayer was made at the Tate, which was preceded by the first ever Iftar dinner organised in its halls, held a week prior to the official launch of *Equal Parts*. This event not only opened up a discursive space, it also opened doors of possibilities to help us envision what public institutions could look like.









Peckham Palms

Southwark Council, London (2018-2020)
with Something & Son

The Palms is a new Afrocentric retail space, in the heart of Peckham, which provides exceptional hairstyling and beauty services, with high-quality food and drink, and a multi-use event venue. This covered marketplace will be home to over thirty professional hair and beauty stylists and lifestyle businesses. This will be enhanced with a new bar and food kiosks that are expertly curated to meet the needs of customers from all backgrounds, particularly those looking for more diverse and eclectic retail offers. The Palms exists to support and grow London's lucrative Afro hair and beauty industry, with a mission to put the power back into the hands of the communities that The Palms works with, and to create new opportunities for women to work collaboratively and to thrive.

Southwark Council invited Something & Son to tender and manage a new Afro hair and beauty hub in Bournemouth Close in order to relocate businesses during Peckham Rye Station Square's development. Beyond a simple relocation project, Something & Son designed the identity of Peckham Palms; they developed the brand, concept and ethos of this centralised space for new businesses, working collaboratively with hair and beauty service providers working on Blenheim Grove. Something & Son initially worked with Tree Shepherd and Llandolt Brown to develop the project and carry out R&D and community consultation.

-Adapted from Peckham Palms Website Description

Peckham Palms was launched in February 2019 after 3.5 years of R&D, consultation and workshopping with black hairdressers, other local residents and businesses. Elias provided creative and structural support during the extensive R&D programme, which was undertaken so that the resulting retail space could be meaningfully co-designed to better meet the users' business and cultural needs. Today, *Peckham Palms* is an Afrocentric hair and beauty retail hub and co-working space, led by black women, whose capacity builds sole traders and micro-businesses.





Peckham Food Hall

Southwark Council, London (2020)

Collaborators:

Izatu's Kitchen
Steamer London
Copeland Jerk Centre Ltd.
Farok Agoro

Peckham Food Hall is a two-year Meanwhile project designed to support and house three food businesses based in Peckham Rye station while it underwent two years of regeneration works. The operators of Copeland Jerk Centre Ltd, Izatu's Kitchen and Steamer Chinese have lived and worked in Peckham collectively for over thirty years, serving food in the station. Each business had its own unique set of challenges when shifting from the spaces they had invested their lives into. This was also compounded with the declining patronage of their usual customers, who have no cause to visit this rapidly gentrified area of Peckham.

This work was undertaken on behalf of Southwark Council. Elias adopted the role of a change management consultant, providing support to the owners in adapting and sustaining their businesses along with shifting trends and new audiences. The space was designed in collaboration with Farok Agoro and the local establishments. The day-to-day support ranged from branding, health and safety, licensing, online sales and delivery services, to marketing, visual merchandising and supply chains. *Peckham Food Hall* opened in the Summer of 2019, and the businesses have since seen significant growth and garnered new interest while retaining their core customer base.

The space was also used for community workshops and acted as a base for *Something & Son* and the *Tomorrow's Market Programme*. The windows were also used in the evenings as a public gallery space for digital and new media artworks produced by Elias and Abbas Zahedi.

Hours

Sun 8:30 - 11:30
Mon 8:30 - 11:30
Tues 8:30 - 11:30
Wed 8:30 - 11:30









Tomorrow's Market

The Greater London Authority, London (2019-2020)

Collaborator:

Hazel Durrant

Tomorrow's Market was a two-year pilot programme designed while working in partnership with the London Growth Hub and the Mayor of London. It was a small business development programme that aimed to future-proof street markets across London. The programme focused on removing the glass ceiling that prevents marginalized communities from reaching their full business potential.

Tomorrow's Market's work in future-proofing over the past eighteen months has supported over thirty new traders to develop and grow their businesses. The team behind the programme also worked closely with market management teams providing consultancy on workflow management, design, marketing and market curation.

This programme was delivered with the support of:

Thalia Gray (Sheer Chemistry), Maria Knowles (Makatcha), Vanessa Provin (Beho), Lilli Conreen (Depop/Student High Street), Sally Williams (Retail Revival), Ian Dodds (Kerb), Fabio Diu (Real Food Festival), Stuart Horwood (Brixton Market Traders Federation), Abdiodun Adesoji (Lower Marsh), Debbie Carpenter (Camden Council), Tina Jadav (Greater London Authority), Stephan Sidebottom, Andia Dollia (Attitude Ltd.).

**FRESH FRUIT
FRESH MEAT
FRESH IDEAS
FRESH START
APPLY NOW**



**PUT
SOMETHING
AWAY
FOR A
RAINY
DAY**



**GET THE
SUPPORT
YOU NEED
TO SUCCEED**



**TURN
YOUR
PASSION
IN TO YOUR
LIVELIHOOD**

**TOMORROW
IS THE
FUTURE**



**BE YOUR
OWN
BOSS
BECOME
A MARKET
TRADER
TODAY**



tm



**LEARN
TRADE
GROW
EXCHANGE**



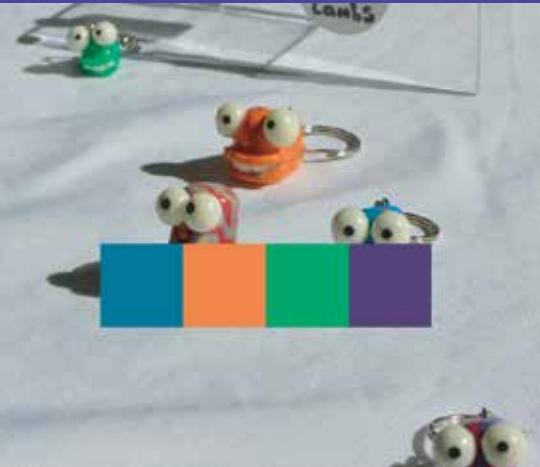
**LAST
CHANCE
DEADLINE
MIDNIGHT**

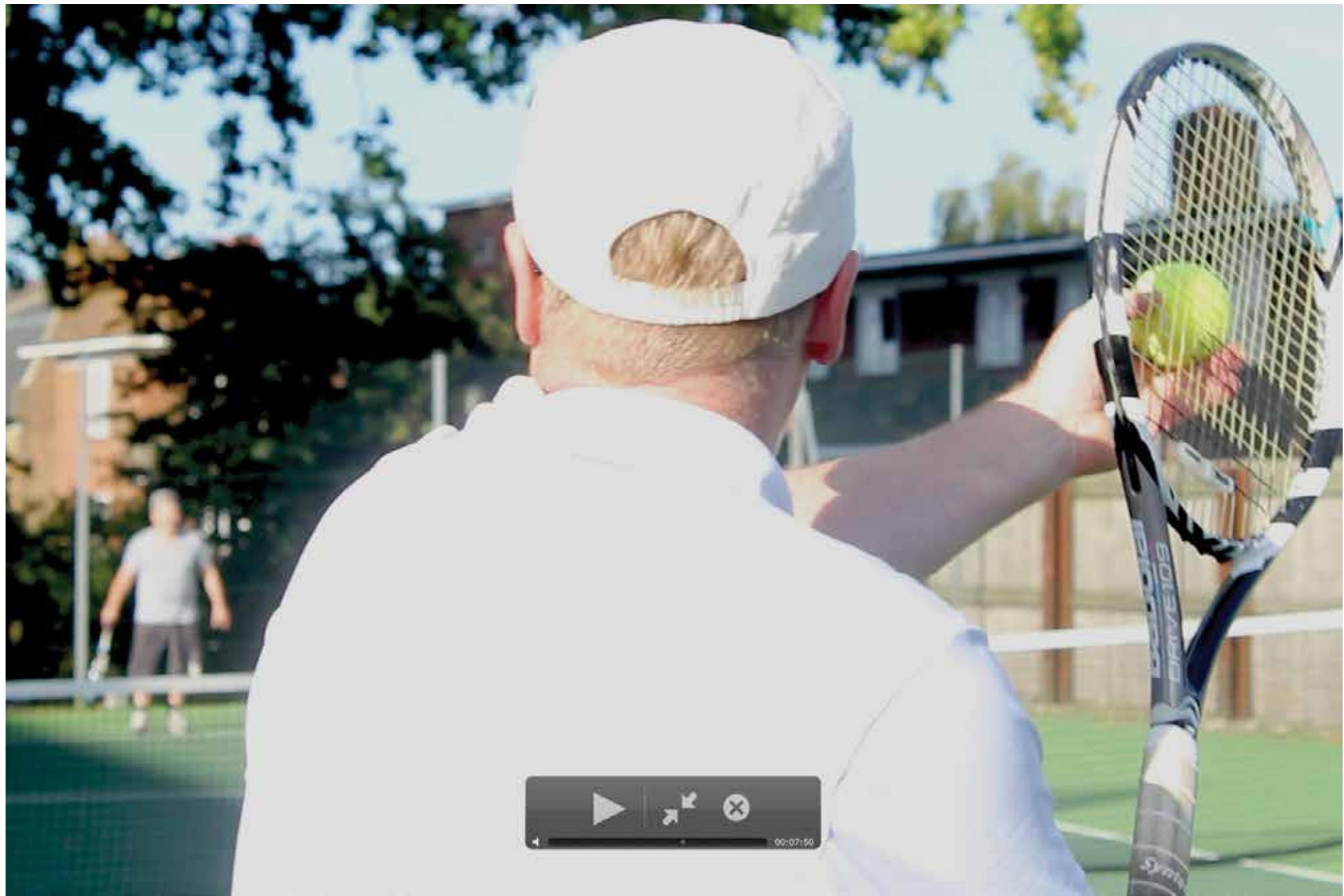


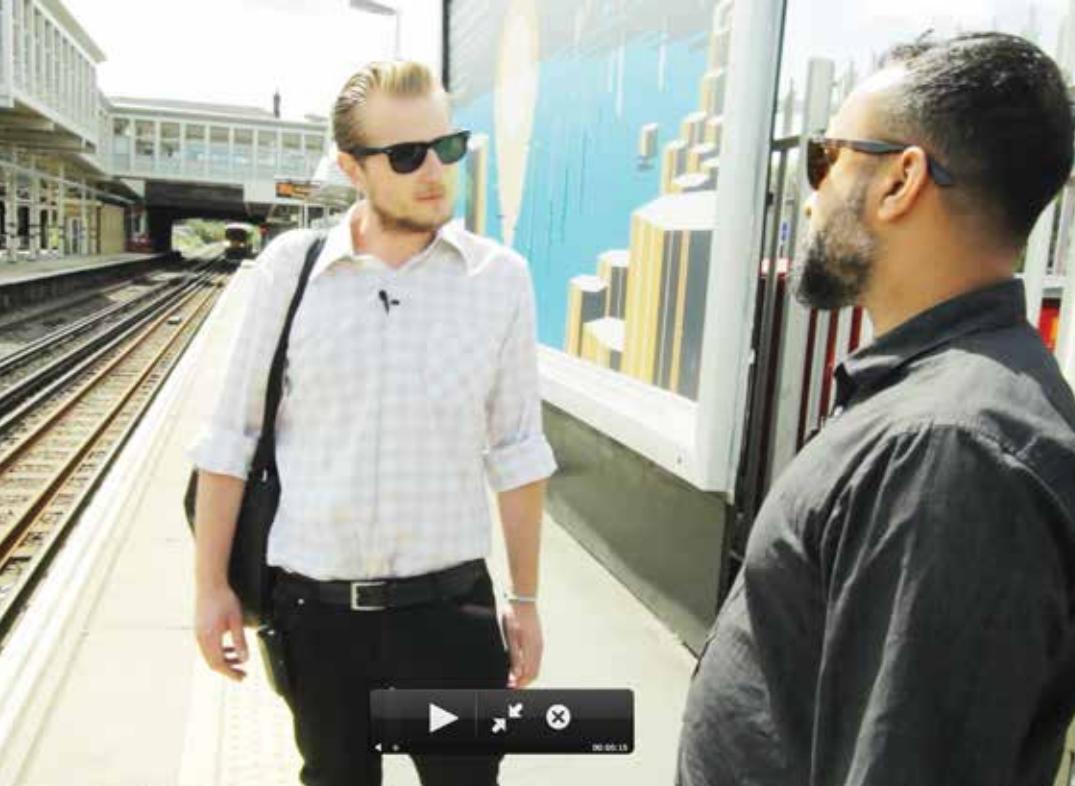
**LONDON
ARTISTS
FOR
LONDON
MARKETS**



**LAMIDE
STARTED
TRADING AT
CHATSWORTH
MARKET**







Parasitic University of London: Guerilla Lecture Initiative

Goldsmiths University, London (2016-2017)

The *Guerilla Lecture Initiative*, part of the *Parasitic University* alternative learning framework conceived during Elias' Design Critical Practice MA at Goldsmiths University, was a lecture series that brought six academics into public communal venues across London. The intention of these films was to illustrate the pre-existing forms of learning, which take place in "non-academic" spaces and widen the access to institutional resources.

Lectures

Terry Rosenberg and Martin Conreen — The Materiality of Sport

Location: Goldsmiths Tennis Courts, New Cross, London

Description: While playing tennis, Martin Conreen, material expert and founder of the Institute of Making, and Terry Rosenberg, senior lecturer of design at Goldsmiths, discussed the material networks and evolution of sport as well as the philosophy of sports

Dr Gabriel Dattatreyan and Dr Martyn Wemyss — Postcolonial Train Debate

Location: London Overground New Cross, Highbury Islington, London

Description: Over the course of their journey on the Overground, Dr Gabriel Dattatreyan and Dr Martyn Wemyss, professors of anthropology at Goldsmiths, discussed a number of postcolonial theories and subject matter, interjected with personal reflections; utilised the train and their surroundings as pedagogical tools.

Vinny Montag — The Museum of the Refused Design Thinking Workshop

Location: Fat Walrus Pub, New Cross, London

Description: Vinny Montag, designer, studio manager and adjunct lecturer at Goldsmiths, ran a speculative workshop focused on the design of museums titled The Museum of the Refused in the Fat Walrus Pub. Alaa Alsaraji's ideal museum, which housed all the things she felt were lacking or misrepresented in museum spaces.

Dr. Rose Sinclair — Education and the Diaspora

Location: Deptford Market, Deptford, London

Description: Dr Rose Sinclair's lesson focused on urban development, gentrification and education. Involving a walk around the Deptford Market, examining the different shops and stalls, her lesson was one of visual association. Sinclair selected different tropes present in the market, identified their relationships to the redevelopment of Deptford, and recontextualised them with postcolonial analyses.

Dr Ricardo Leizaola — Decolonising Cuisine Ethnobotany in the UK

Location: Junction Market Off License, Walthamstow, London

Description: Dr Ricardo Leizaola academic, writer and filmmaker specialising in ethnobotany and traditional medicine acts as the shop keeper for the day at Junction Market in Walthamstow. Ricardo used fruits and vegetables as learning devices to explore the ethnobotanical journeys and networks of produce.



PARASITIC
UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON

H 10





Parasitic University Mobile Education Unit

London Design Festival. London (2017)

Collaborator: Richard Caraffi

The *Parasitic University of London (PUL)* critically examines the contemporary problems of institutional education, pedagogy and higher learning, primarily focusing on access to academic resources and educational programmes through the freedegree.org.uk website, a platform for mapping and sharing free lectures across London, and the *Guerilla Lecture series*, which brought academics to traditionally non-academic spaces.

The *PUL Mobile Unit* took the concept of unusual learning spaces one step further through the conversion of a moving van into a mobile lecture hall, complete with chairs, reading materials, a projector and a desk. The Mobile Unit then trolled the London Design Festival 2017 by hosting alternative and counter-lectures across London in front of scheduled Design Festival activities and workshops.

The *Mobile Unit*'s series of forums examined urban regeneration, sustainable design and collaborative design processes, and were facilitated not only by designers and academics, but social workers as well. Each forum was designed to be decentralised, without prescribed authorities or experts. Within the intimate confines of the moving van, an informal, open and democratic peer-to-peer learning environment was created, which promoted comfortable and honest sharing sessions.

The project was well received and gathered on average twenty to thirty attendees per lecture, many of whom were redirected on their way in or out of the London Design Festival's programmes or in the area for purposes apart from the Festival. This latter group in particular forms the crucial target audience of *PUL Mobile Unit*, whose primary aim is to engage people who are often overlooked by or uninvolved in institutions in design discourse, via experimental modes of design education in non-academic contexts.







F Y P M

@fypmbrixton

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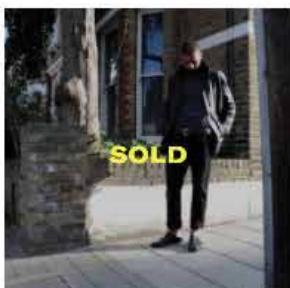
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£55.00



£49.00



£69.00



£45.00



£20.00



£125.00



£75.00



£20.05



£31.00



£20.00



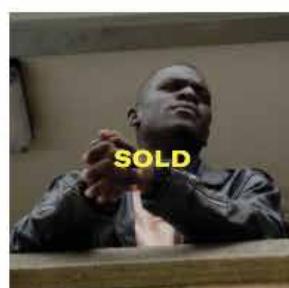
£25.00



£70.00



£55.00



£65.00



£75.00



FYPM Fine Yarn Preserve Maintain

Depop Shop, creative community online marketplace (2017)

Collaborator: Richard Caraffi

FYPM was a vintage and second-hand clothing brand designed to mimic a high-end fashion label. The concept of the store was to preserve and share the narratives and heritage of the garments, creating new looks, upcycling and celebrating the cultural capital of streetwear.

Originally named Tique Booty, *FYPM* was started by Richard Caraffi, a home removal self-proclaimed “man in a van”. Rich had a love for clothing and amassed an exceptional collection of rare clothing from the 1970s to early 1990s. He opened his brick and mortar shop in Brixton Market in 2012, but it closed after three years due to rising rents and the shifting demographics of Brixton. This led to the creation of the *FYPM* Depop shop.

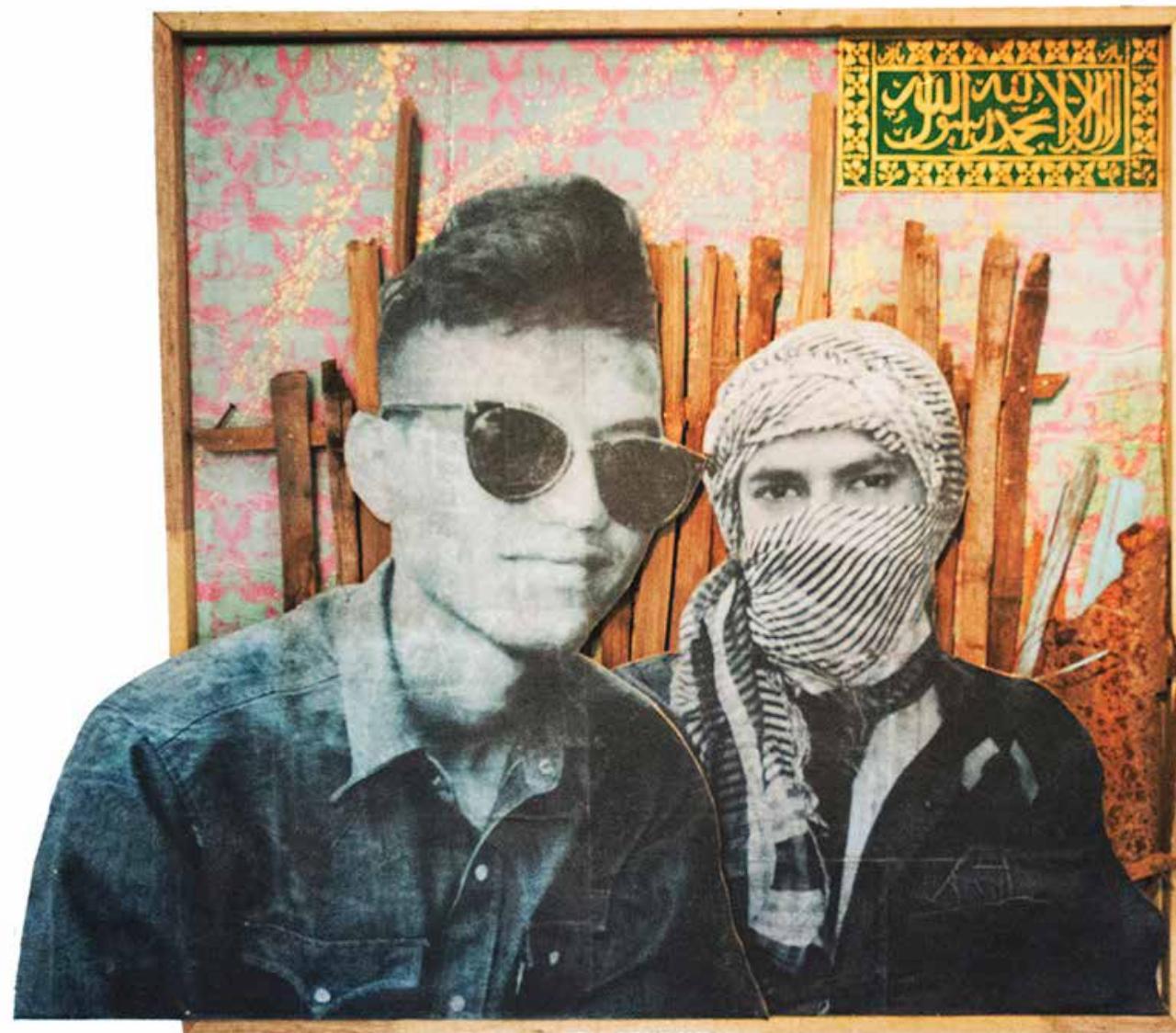
FYPM is at its heart a social project; Elias acted as the creative director of the Depop shop over a six-month period to help rebuild Rich’s business in a new context. He developed the brand, created all the content, styled the looks, shot all of the photographs, promoted, organized and curated the Depop page, and created a number of garments and accessories, which were sold by *FYPM*. The products also addressed contemporary themes such as gender fluidity and investigated the value of commercial objects in general.

Under Elias’ creative directorship, *FYPM* found commercial success. Within the first two months of the shop’s online launch, his photographs were featured on the discover page of Depop Shop, where clients are provided with an overview of leading products. By the third month, the page had three thousand followers, and by month five, almost every item was featured on the discover page. By that time, *FYPM.Brixton* had twelve thousand followers.

Brixton Food & Wine









V64 Residency

V64 Arts, Bangkok (2013-2014)

Exhibitions:

V64 Annual Summer Exhibition

Solo Exhibition El Chiringo

HOF Art Now

Collaborators:

Jamal Rodin

Arif Rodin

Elias participated in a six-month residency between 2013–2014 in which he did a series of works that explored his faith and experiences with migration and refugee camps, specifically those along the Burmese border where he lived and worked as a teenager.

The work was produced with photographs taken over the years and found objects from a demolition site close to the V64 studios. The materials were designed to reflect the weathered corrugated steel homes of Sangkhlaburi where he worked and lived. Broken walls and natural materials were woven together with steel to form baskets and drying racks.

The work was exhibited in three venues across Bangkok in 2014: the V64 Annual Summer Exhibition and open studio, HOF Art Now group exhibition and at El Chiringo in a Solo Exhibition titled *Bismillah* (In the name of God).





Emulsification

Until Something Brings Us Back to Reason

V64 Arts, Bangkok (2014)

At the time I had been working in restaurants for two years back in Philly, prior to returning back to Bangkok. I had just broken up with my partner of three years. I had a lot of people in the countryside of Thailand looking to me for support. Approaching thirty years old, I went back to school for the first time since leaving at fifteen. The different elements of the performance were all these things coming together. I cut onions, referencing art in this context and labour in another. I merged the clothes I used to pray with, the school uniform and floral patterns. I covered myself up in layers of veils, remembering the Hadith "there are seventy thousand veils between heaven and earth." And I cut my hair to break away from all of it. Returning to Thailand and art and being back in Bangkok was, in a way, starting fresh and finding release. The eggs were about birth. Those frying in the projection were about the transformation of and combination of elements that formed something new. But really it was simple. It was a performance in a gallery about change.

-Abdullah Elias

Emulsification was a performance that interpreted the experience of personal identification and clashes of culture, expectations and faith. Elias handmade his costume from an upcycled university uniform, a floral patterned textile designed to mimic a kurta, and his aunt's head scarf.

Seated on a pedestal and surrounded by an arrangement of onions, Elias began a performance ritual involving the repetitious cutting of onions, backdropped by a projection of eggs being beaten and fried on loop. At the end of the performance, he removed his veils and masks to reveal himself then cut his hair before walking off stage.

This performance was part of the event Until Something Brings Us Back to Reason, curated by Pierre Bechon of TARS Gallery Bangkok.





Ban Thor Phan

Sangklaburi, Thailand (2004-2012)

Ban Thor Phan creates adaptable modern designs for the ever-evolving global market. With three bases of operations in Thailand, Japan and here in Philadelphia, they have a unique global perspective of fashion and cultural trends in the mainstream and in regional style; using the finest natural materials, hand woven textiles, organic hemp and bamboo cotton, with their signature dyeing techniques, using the time honoured tradition of frigid leave and bark dying.

BTP is more than just a clothing company. BTP is a self-sufficient sustainable non-profit orphanage solely funded by their clothing line. All proceeds go to support their 55 orphaned abandoned and abused children. Not only do they support the children, they have also developed an amazing formula for enriching the lives of the surrounding refugee communities in Thailand through their efforts in saving people from the burdens of working in sweatshops—taking people out of the sweatshops and creating workspaces in their own homes and giving them a healthy living wage and the availability to spend time with their families and the time and space to create their own hours. Ban Thor Phan's goal is to spread their model and inspire the world, on and off the runway, to better themselves and the world around them.

-CBS News 2010

Elias worked for *Ban Thor Phan* for eight years, supporting the development of a number of social design projects, which transformed migrant trades into sustainable businesses, including a coffee company that gathered foraged wild coffee from the Tong Yai National Park, a brick company, two organic farms, a retreat centre and a natural clothing company which used traditional bark and indigo dyeing techniques. All the subsidiary businesses' proceeds supported the *Ban Thor Phan Children's Home*. Elias supported day-to-day operations and designed clothing for the clothing line that was featured in Philadelphia Fashion Week in 2010.





Common Knowledge x Reclaim Print Studio

Art Collective and Print shop, Philadelphia (2010–2013)

The *Common Knowledge* Collective was a socio-political arts collective, based in West Philadelphia. The collective is formed of four members: Quan Blanche, Russell Shoatz, Doc Harris and Elias. They generated works between 2009 and 2015 that explored concerns with race, class and gender, and also celebrated the under-represented diaspora's American experience.

Common Knowledge also supported the everyday operation of the *Reclaim Print Studio*. *Reclaim* was established by Quan Blanche through a grant scheme sponsored by the Leeway Foundation. The print studio provided classes and low-cost print services to grassroots organizations and start-up fashion brands, and offered training programmes for people of all ages to build skills.

Elias worked with *Common Knowledge* for three years, producing artwork and supporting the development of *Reclaim Print Studio*, working with a number of start-up brands and community organizations including Philadelphia Print Works, Wierdo, Matthew Law, BLM, Philadelphia City Council, M.O.V.E and ACAF Centre.

Common Knowledge also produced a series of music and poetry events. Most notably, the *PSA* series brought together the Last Poets, Reef the Lost Cause, Oluwafemi, and Dead Prez to raise awareness about the inhumane practices of the criminal justice system and raise money to free political prisoner Russell Maroon Shoatz.

Testimonials

I believe Abdullah has an incredibly exciting practice, combining many exceptional talents and a critical approach to programming, artistic content, partnership work and audience engagement.

Annie Bedford

Producer (Communities)

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

Abdul's approach to arts and culture public programming and curation has given new life to a stagnated space of 'cultural inclusion' which many institutions and cultural activities have struggled with in the recent years. With aims in bringing access and engagement to arts from communities who may feel detached from the cultural sector a priority since the 90's, the results have not materialised and many organisations find it difficult in truly engaging with programming in innovative ways that provide measurable results. The work I have seen Abdul contribute to this space has been pioneering, delivered results, and has creating lasting impact and encouraged further investment into new ways of approaching curation and programming in public space.

Hassan Vawda

Doctoral Researcher,

Tate Britain & Tate Modern

Abdul was a student of much diligence, ability and also generosity. He works well in teams, supportive of, and a great motivator of others, and, also works well on his own (more than ready to take on individual responsibility). As can be seen from his post-Masters activities he is a go- getter. His drive and enthusiasm are matched with social concern and ethical responsibility. Through his projects he contributes hugely to community well-being and stimulates local economies.

Terence E Rosenberg

Senior Lecturer, Design

Goldsmiths College University of London





Over the last 2 years, Abdul has developed a highly creative and innovative programme to test and trial a concept around providing business support and mentoring within a street markets concept. The success of the programme is reflective of Abdul's hard work, creative flair and attention to detail. Throughout the programme we have been impressed by Abdul's careful eye for visual representation of the programme. In particular Abdul's work on the branding, messaging and the curation of material to help communicate and market the programme.

Tina Jadav

Principal Project Officer, Regeneration and Economic Development
GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Abdul has a specialism and particular aptitude for working in collaboration with and galvanising diverse groups of people to engage, actively and meaningfully, in art, vocational training and entrepreneurial activity. He has consistently pushed the bar and exceeded the expectations set by commissioning bodies, delivery partners and beneficiaries of our services.

Paul Smyth

Founder and Director
Something & Son LTD.

for the ancestors lost and the generations to come