The Artist, The Community, The Council and The Philanthropist
Verity-Jane Keefe

4 October – 6 December 2025

Episodes 1–3 at Eastside Projects
Episode 4 at The Friends Institute, 220 Moseley Road, Highgate, Birmingham B12 0DG.
Access is via the Charity Shop on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 10am–3pm.

In a part fact and part fictional neighbourhood, in the city of the Publics, against a backdrop of eroding public services, we find ourselves moving through three timelines in the past, present and future – 1985 (there's no money), 2025 (there's no money) and 2065 (there's no money).

The Artist, The Community, The Council and The Philanthropist is part soap-opera, part community radio play, set within a former Friends Institute now community centre and charity shop which is much loved but crumbling through managed decline.

The cast of characters who inhabit each scene include 'The Community' which has shifted over time to become many, many people with different needs and priorities, 'The Council 1, 2, 3' (The Higher Ups, The Swollen Middle and The Ground) and the bust of 'The Philanthropist' who oversees and narrates the action despite being removed in recent times from its plinth to a new home underneath the microwave in the management office.

Both the bust and the building have observed and lived through physical and social change, the decline of public services, bankruptcy, rats the size of actual rats, heart shaped chocolates, community ambition and a growing need for collectivity.

Verity-Jane Keefe's collaborative artwork projects into the future, looking at the past from the present day. Written by the artist following a period of workshop activity with different community groups, the script centres on 'useful escapism' to imagine alternative anti-paternalistic neighbourhood models – grassroots spaces of speculation and fantasy with one foot in the real. If the community was in charge what would they do? If there was no local authority what could happen? If everything genuinely collapsed into chaos how would we keep things afloat?

The episodic work is performed by Verity and a community cast. Recorded in the same studio as BBC Radio 4's *The Archers*, and inspired by the long running place based soap, Verity shifts the focus to an urban, pseudo representation of place informed by archival research, conversation, observation and workshops. Connecting Eastside Projects and The Friends Institute on Moseley Road in Highgate, chapters 1–3 play amongst sculptural scenography as stage set across the gallery and chapter 4 in situ in the Friends Institute, next to The Philanthropist's empty plinth.

The Community (cast) are Bibana, Cathy, Chez, David, Dionne, Donovan, Gift, Hayley, James, Jayne, Liz, Margaret, Roger, Rosemarie, Q and Verity (& carers & crowd extras Schueeb and Emma).

Supported by a Wheatley Fellowship at the Birmingham School of Art, Birmingham City University.

Verity has been working with the following groups at the Moseley Road Friends Institute over the last year, first as participant and then leading a series of workshops with both:

Self Writing Group led by Hayley Frances (Hayley, Cathy, Donovan, Irine, Dionne, Liz, Rosemarie, Q) and **Arts & Crafts Monday Group** led by Arts All Over The Place / Margaret Murray (Margaret, Bibi, Maria, Maria, Gracie, Roger, Gift, James, Chez, Danny).

With huge thanks to:
- Jayne, David and Cathy at the Friends Institute Charity Shop for letting me work with them, photograph and rearrange the space, and research the history of the building through its ownership and former uses
- Neville Davies, Mr B and Barry from the Friends Institute
- The Moseley Road Community Conservation Trust
- Hayley Frances and The Writing Group
- Margaret Murray, Arts All Over The Place and The Arts and Crafts Group
- The Stanhope Wellbeing Hub Womens' Group and Thursday lunch club, St Albans Church
- Fern House Care Home
- The shopkeepers, cafe owners and workers of Highgate for conversation and workspace
- Jessica Bunch for script and production advice
- Donald McDonald for sound recording and engineering
- Josh Taylor Moon for sound install
- Ezra for transport and patience
- Matt Foster and Joe Welden from Plane Structure for exhibition fabrication
- Suzi Osborne and Tom Bloor for exhibition installation
- Albert Smith for lunch
- R&G Fabrications for welding
- An Endless Supply for graphic design

Supported using public funding by
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